BEANS AND BACKSTRAP

Recollections of Adventures in Depression Years

by

GORDON JESSE WALKER

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My ancestors came to the Rogue River Valley in the early 1860's, in covered wagons, from the state of Iowa. They settled in the country where the Lost Creek Dam is now. They raised cattle and other livestock for a living.

I was born in 1923 before the depression years. My folks owned a post office, gas station, and store at Beagle in the late 1920's. It was located at the north end of the Rogue River Valley, currently where Beagle and Antioch Roads cross, north-west corner. In later years, 1934, my Dad got a job carrying mail. He ran the route for eight years. I went to a school called Antioch. My sister, Loretta, started there too.

I started work at age eleven. It consisted of farming, orchard work and woodcutting, and I fell and bucked timber with crosscut saws at age eighteen. As time marched on I was a logger, a sawmill worker, and I spent 31 years working on the Rogue River National Forest.

BEANS AND BACKSTRAP was written to describe how a good many old-timers put meat on the table during the depression years which started in 1929. Beans and potatoes were generally plentiful and so was deer meat if we were careful. My cousin, Don Case, and I ran on to rattlesnakes, other night hunters, and we always out-guessed the game wardens. We were trailed by timber wolves, cougar, and coyotes. We never traveled on foot at night using a flashlight.

To Don and I this was no doubt truly a highlight of our lives. We not only supplied two families with deer meat, it was also the best recreation any two young mountain men could dream up. It caused adrenalin to flow just thinking about it and planning a hunt.

Nowadays people would call such activity poaching. But we called it survival. We never wasted any meat nor depleted the deer population.

The years we lived in Beagle country were some of the best years of our lives, and I'm glad to share some of the hair-raising events that Don and I caused to happen.

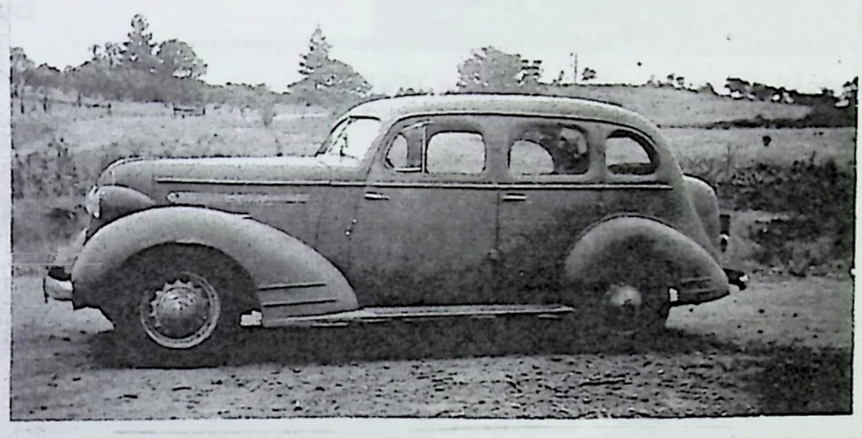
DEDICATION

To write this book took a lot of encouragement and correction of misspelled words. I dedicate this script to my wife of 47 years, Bea Walker. She lived through the latter part of the depression hardships, only in a different part of the State of Oregon.

THANKS

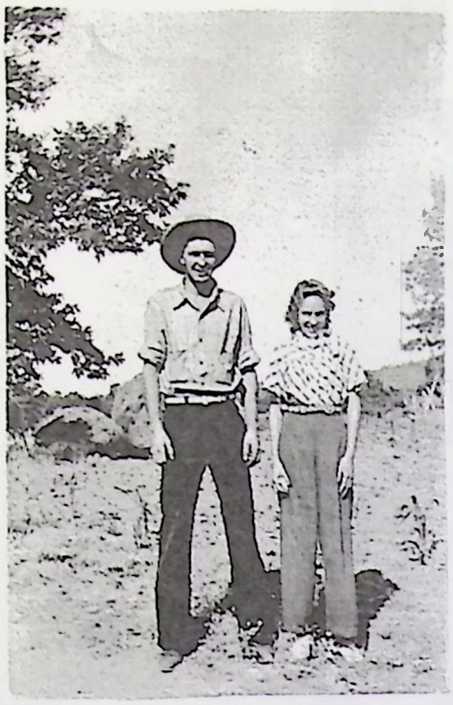
I want to thank my daughter, Tricia Kraemer, for typing, organizing, assembling pictures and chapters, and putting everything into book form. Also for all the good advice on various other little details I would have missed, thank you.

Gordon Jesse Walker Donald Monroe Case
1937 Pontiac



1937 Pontiac. Owner – Donald Case

Antioch School House
One room, all 8 grades, up to 46 children, one teacher



Donald Case Loretta Mae Walker

Buster Case Earl Case

Black Bear caught in Chimney Rock country

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CHAPTER ONE
DEPRESSION YEARS

During the late twenties and early thirties it was awful tough going for most people, especially poor folks like we were. I classed a poor man as one who worked hard to make a living. Manual labor was hard to find because every one was out of work. When one was lucky enough to find a job the hours were generally long and hard for little pay.

A poor man could barely earn enough to buy food and clothing, especially shoes. He lived from hand to mouth, day after day, with little hopes for the future.

I started to school in 1929. The first thing I realized was that I hated book learning. Teachers seemed mean and older kids picked on me and sometimes beat me up. But that was when I began to look around and see what was happening. I didn't understand why my parents wouldn't buy me a nice-looking pair of shoes when my old ones were badly worn, or why my mother had to patch holes in my bib overalls to hide bare knee caps. My socks were so full of holes I could almost put them on from all four sides and both ends before they were replaced.

As needy as we were there were others worse off than us. One boy about my age wore clothes that had patches on patches. It was evident that a large patch was sown over each elbow. In the center of the big patch was a smaller one attached. His trousers had matching patches on the knees and one across the seat.

One morning at school, before the bell rang, he walked up beside me. I noticed a leather string tied around the toe of one shoe to hold the sole on. The following week he got off the school bus and ran toward me holding up one arm. He was wearing a new shirt. The material was new and would keep him warm. I asked how much it cost on the off chance my folks might buy me one similar. But it was homemade. The material was part of an army blanket. His mother made a pattern to fit the six year old boy. Pieces were hand-stitched together, and he sported a form-fitting shirt.

My Dad was a dry land farmer. Including tillable ground and pasture there were four hundred acres of land. The property bordered the Texas boundary on the east side. The place was about six miles from a small town called Bellview, New Mexico.

He tilled fields and hauled the crops, using six head of horses and one big mule, two at a time. They pulled the plows, corn planters, and disks. There was a weed cutter he used called a go-devil. It was constructed from heavy two-by-twelve inch lumber. The boards were eight feet long and stood on edge. Two sharp knives were mounted slant-wise at each side. They were four feet long and five inches wide. The contraption stood up about four feet above ground so a man could ride. It was pulled up and down between rows of corn. The knives slipped along just below the surface and cut the roots of encroaching weeds.

We raised hogs and chickens, and milked six head of Holstein cows. Every year five or six head of hogs were butchered. The meat was salted down for awhile, then the pieces were hung from beams in the smoke house to finish the cure.

The folks made sausage, liverwurst, and head cheese from the pork. It was stuffed in long cloth sack-like containers. The sausage was put down in lard pails after it was cooked.

There was plenty of milk, butter and cottage cheese. There were lots of eggs, and there was fried chicken quite often. We always had plenty of food in the house, but spending

money was hard to come by. The grocery store paid five cents a dozen for eggs. There was no market for milk, and we could hardly give pork or beef away.

Dad sold some corn and wheat, but it took most of what he raised to feed the stock, hogs, and chickens. Wheat was ground fine into flour, and corn was ground up for breakfast cereal. The money earned was spent to purchase sugar, salt, pepper, and coffee. Shoes and clothes were hardest to come by. It was really tough to keep the old 1926 Chev car on the road. Times were tough.

Dad worked hard from daylight until dark working the farm and caring for the animals. There was no water well on the place, and it had to be hauled on a wagon from a neighbor two miles away. He made two or three trips a week and hauled 300 gallons at a time.

Where we lived, wood was almost unheard of for fuel. Coal cost twenty bucks a ton, and no money. Times like that, Dad would hitch a team of horses to a long, wide wagon. Mom packed a picnic lunch and we would head out for Texas that was only a mile away. The horses pulled the wagon all day long. Someone would be walking along each side, tossing on dry cow pies or chips. By late afternoon the load would be high, long, and wide. We used a stick to turn the chips over before they were picked up. There was a snake or lizard under most of them. Some were small rattlesnakes.

A load of cow chips would last about a month for heating the house and cooking. It burned up fairly quick. There couldn't be any packed into the house unless they were put in the stove immediately. If some were stored in the coal box the warm air caused numerous-sized bugs to appear, and a few of them looked desperate.

One time in the dead of winter, there wasn't any money to buy coal with. The company agreed to trade a ton of coal for a ton of corn. When we ran out of coal that winter, we burned ears of corn to keep warm by. A couple years there were three or four big piles of corn cobs near the granary. That was our winter's fuel supply.

There were several years of hard times and rough sledding, but our health was generally good. There was only one tragic thing happened. My youngest sister, Lena Mae, passed away when she was only sixteen months old. The doctors called it "summer complaint".

In 1932, our way of life started to turn around. We made plans to go back to Oregon for a new start. Loretta and I were born there. It was also our mother's home state.

Our folks wanted to wait until election day to be able to vote. Franklin D. Roosevelt was their choice for president of the United States.

Loretta and I hunted up every magazine and book we could find, showing pictures of timber, rivers, and streams. Mountains were unheard of. About all we could remember was prairies and flat land. Our friends were envious and sad to see us leave.

Early one Monday morning, right at sun-up, we headed out for Hereford, Texas. We would get on a passenger train and be on our way. The total trip was supposed to take five days and nights. Loretta and I looked back toward the home we were in for five years. Our old friend, Rover, was sitting beside the house watching our departure. Little did the poor dog realize he would never see us again. I often wondered what ever happened to our dog.

Riding on a real train was new to us all. It was hard to imagine what it would be like. The fourth day out there was a minor train wreck. Wheels at the back end of the car we were on broke loose and jumped the track. It wasn't moving very fast, so there wasn't much damage beyond that.

The town of Medford, Oregon, came into view on Sunday about mid-day. We were completely worn out and hungry for something to eat besides cold chicken and dry bread sandwiches. We bought food along the way when the train stopped long enough.

The Rogue River Valley was a beautiful place. Hills and steep mountains bordered all four sides, and numerous swift streams of water everywhere. And when Loretta and I saw Mt. Pitt (McLaughlin), it seemed unreal. There was actually snow up there, something we had never seen.

We left Medford and drove north on Highway 62. Our aunt, Mom's sister, and family lived at the mouth of Little Butte Creek, just off the Crowfoot Road. They lived in a big two-story house and raised cattle and farmed for a living.

Here we were, back in Oregon. All our worldly possessions were on our backs and in a small trunk that was still at the train depot. But if anyone could make it, we could.

We lived with these folks for a few weeks, then moved down to a place in the Northeast corner of the valley, about five miles from Sams Valley. Another sister of Mom's took us in until we could find a house of our own.

Just before winter set in, our dream came true. We moved to a place of our own. It wasn't much, but it was home. It was a two room affair located at the southeast corner of where Dodge and Meadows Roads cross now.

The roof was made of sugar pine shakes. The walls and floor were one-by-twelves with cracks in between. Cold air was shut out by stuffing rags between the floor boards and tacking newspaper and cardboard on the walls.

As I remember, as tough and rough as the early 1930's were, we always looked at any situation with a positive attitude. We were happy and had food to eat and a roof over our heads. What more could anyone want?

Right after we moved into our new home, a neighbor offered my Dad a job. The wages were twenty-five cents an hour, cutting wood. Things were looking up! A work day was nine hours, and the work was hard. The take-home pay was two dollars and twenty-five cents. At the end of a six day week was thirteen dollars and fifty cents, cash money. Of course, there were days during the winter that were unfit for man or beast outdoors. At least we had plenty of wood and a good cook stove to heat the house with.

Our furniture amounted to two folding chairs and a couple of apple boxes. The table was a shelf along one wall. There was a double bed built in one corner of the main room. Dad nailed some boards together. It was a frame about the size of a regular double bed. A neighbor gave us some wheat straw to put on the floor about twenty inches thick. Mom spread a blanket over the straw. It made a real good mattress. But after about a month of use it got a little lumpy. The old straw was replaced with new, and we started over. There was also a folding cot that filled out our bedroom furniture. We used a kerosene lamp to see by after dark.

A neighbor east of us, about a mile away, gave us eggs and milk. We ground wheat to make bread and breakfast cereal, and bought beans and potatoes at the Sams Valley store.

The winter of '32 and '33 was cold. The snow got so deep, a neighbor hauled kids to school on a sleigh, pulled by a team of horses. Jingle bells hung from the harness. But we made it through the dreary winter months and enjoyed seeing things come to life that spring. What amazed me, none of us suffered the slightest symptoms of a cold.

Dad heard about a different place to move before another winter. It was a three bedroom house with kitchen and front room. A spring would furnish us with good cold water. A small, live stream was nearby. A few yards away there was a big barn. An open

field spread out to the south. It would have been really nice to have been able to buy that place.

It wasn't much trouble to move. Dad borrowed a team and wagon to haul what few things we had and threw on a couple tier of wood left over from winter. There was enough furniture that went with the new home to fill out just right, even three, real bedsteads. It seemed so nice, Loretta and I actually had our own bedrooms.

Mom cooked up a good supper the first night. We had red beans, potatoes, hot biscuits, and clover honey. But we didn't have any meat, not even to season the beans with.

Dad was sipping on his second cup of coffee when someone knocked at the front door. I ran and opened it wide to see who it was. About a mile away lived an old man and his son. They were friends who came by to welcome us to the neighborhood. The folks were really glad to see them. Mom cleared the table on one side and set two clean plates so they could eat a bite. But all they would accept was coffee. They brought us up-to-date on happenings during our five years absence, and reminisced of by-gone days.

The two men existed on meager government pensions. They had plenty to eat, but now and then had to supplement their diet with deer meat. The older gentleman told us that the best way to hunt, out of season, was at night. His son set up a salt lick behind their barn. He was quite choosy in his selection. The hay mow was a good place to watch from. It might be several nights before the right deer showed up. He watched for a four-point buck or a barren doe. They took care of the meat quickly so none would spoil, and used it all before killing another one.

They told us where a salt lick had been set up a few years ago. Down at the lower end of our new place was a spring. It was easy to find, in fact, the two men walked past it when they came to visit.

When the two men departed they urged us to try our luck, but we should look the place over first. They said if we needed a flashlight we could borrow theirs.

The next day Dad and I went scouting. About a half mile away, across the field, there was a dandy little spring. Nearby was a tree stump where someone had placed a heavy wooden box. Near that was a Doug Fir with steps that led up to a platform. It was almost out of sight, behind a clump of limbs.

There wasn't much salt on hand, but Mom filled a quart fruit jar with hot water and dissolved half pound of table salt. Dad poured it in the box after it was rebuilt. He renailed the steps that were made of two-by-four inch lumber. The platform was solid.

Dad climbed up to try it out and broke off a twig or two for a better view of the spring and salt lick. It was such an exciting adventure.

My Dad was a quiet man and didn't talk too much. But he was a deep thinker. By the time we reached the house he had it all figured out.

Loretta and Mom listened as he told about what we did. He wanted me to go down to the lick in a couple or three days and check it out. If deer had started using it there would be lots of tracks, something I had never seen before..

On the third day I wanted to go see what was happening. Loretta and I headed out across the field toward the spring. It gave me such an important feeling to actually be doing something on my own.

It was amazing how the deer had been using the lick. The salt-hungry animals had cut the place up with their sharp hooves. The salt box had been chewed on by a porcupine. We found a couple quills laying nearby.

Loretta and I ran almost all the way back to the house. We were both talking at once. We had never seen anything like it in our lives. Loretta held up the two porcupine quills as some of the evidence.

When Dad came home that afternoon, Mom told him the story. We started making plans to kill a deer. Us kids were never to mention a thing about hunting at night or any other time. Mum was the word about the salt lick and spring. If word got out, there might be a policeman knocking on the door and would ask a lot of questions and do some looking around. We could be faced with a fine, and maybe Dad might have to spend a few days in jail. It really hit home when they told Loretta and I that. No one would ever hear a thing from us.

That evening, after supper, we sat around the table making plans. Dad went to a closet and brought back a gun. It was a twenty five thirty five. It had a long, octagon-shaped barrel. I've heard it called a Long-tom. (I still own the gun to this day.)

The gun had killed many a deer and maybe a bear or two. He looked it over and counted the shells that were left. To brighten up the front sight he took a small piece of adhesive tape and carefully stuck it to the front sight. It might help when he started looking for the end of the gun barrel after dark. In fact, tomorrow night would be a good time to try it out.

All the next day Mom and us kids kept close watch of the main road. If any strange cars or pickups drove by it could mean trouble. But our surveillance was in vain. There were only two cars went by all day, and one of them wasn't running good.

Loretta and I were never so excited in our lives. Ever since we had come back to Oregon something new and different happened all the time. But this was the most difficult thing of all for us to comprehend.

We ate an early supper of cornbread and milk. Dad nervously checked his gun and put seven shells in the magazine. It had been six years or so since he had pulled its trigger and felt it kick when the shell exploded.

Loretta and I were so excited we didn't know what to do. But Mom had the answer. She took an old blanket and went out to the edge of the field beyond the barn. We followed, wondering what she had in mind. She laid it down, flat, and told us to sit on one end. The other end was pulled up over us and made a nice shelter. It was easy to peer out by raising it up a little. If anyone happened along, they would think Loretta and I were playing house.

Now we could watch everything that took place. Dad lined out across the field, carrying the heavy gun. Mom stayed about a hundred feet away from us so she could keep an eye on the road and be ready to help when Dad shot a deer.

We watched as evening shadows became long, misshapen silhouettes. The sun disappeared behind the mountain. Mom and Dad had a signal figured out between them so if something was amiss he would know what to do. The gun would be stashed at a prefigured place. There would be a gunny sack half full of kindling wood, called pitch. He would also have an axe handy. No one would think a thing about seeing a man walking home with a sack of fire starting material slung over one shoulder.

Loretta and I had never been camping in our life, and what we were doing was a stranger to us. We had listened to hoot owls and coyotes before, but not out in the open like this. Cold chills went up my back when a Great Horned owl began to hoot from the mountainside. About a half mile across the canyon another one answered. Screech owls were cutting up in an oak tree down by the creek. Crickets and frogs made so much noise

it seemed like it would scare every deer in the county. But we remained still and quiet, never moving a muscle.

Everything was quite obscure now, except our mother. We could barely see her silhouetted against a background of light-colored soil in the field. She was folding and turning an apron in her hands, anticipating what was about to happen.

Dad left the gun near the stump where he had stashed the sack of pitch and axe. He went to the salt lick to see if there were any new man-tracks. Everything seemed to be panning out. He retrieved the gun and proceeded to climb the steps to the platform in the fir tree. It might be a long wait before something came in.

Dad heard the same owls we did, but to him it was welcome company. He heard a thumping sound. Two deer must be playing around at the edge of the open field. His heart beat faster as he gripped the gun with sweaty hands and pointed it toward the salt lick. The white tape stood out good and plain.

For a short time there was dead silence. Not the slightest breeze nor the sound of a cricket or frog was evident. Suddenly there was the huge form of an animal walking silently toward the salt box.

Less than forty feet away was the biggest four point buck Dad had seen for several years. The deer moved along as quiet as a ghost and stopped near the salt lick. Dad pointed the heavy rifle and took careful aim at the animal's head and squeezed the trigger. Fire belched from the gun. The explosion echoed up the canyon and off the hillsides. Dad leaned back against the tree trunk and rubbed his shoulder.

Loretta and I had given up hope. Mom was standing motionless. We, too, noticed the same dead quietness Dad did. What caused it we never knew. We wished the house wasn't so far away.

Suddenly there was an ear-splitting explosion that came from the direction Dad had gone. The echo was nearly as loud as the original blast. Loretta screamed and Mom started fidgeting around. I don't remember what my reaction was except I kept quiet and never moved, and tried to see through the dark.

The silence was nerve-wracking. What was happening down at the salt lick? Mom was worried. Seemed like Dad should have showed up by now. She decided to walk down and see what had happened. Us kids had to stay behind and wait. But Mom came close and assured us that everything was okay and she would be back shortly. Just as she turned and started to leave, a movement caught her eye. It was Dad. He walked straight toward us and never uttered a word until he was close, and said in a heavy voice, "I missed".

We walked up to the house and went inside. Mom touched a match to a kerosene lamp. Dad poured himself a cup of coffee and sat down, worn out. He told us what had happened.

When he pulled on the big buck he aimed at his head. At close range the high-powered rifle shot high. The deer bounded away, untouched. What a letdown, and so disappointing. But next time he would aim just under the deer's head and that should do it.

We decided to wait a few days before another attempt to get some meat. He wanted to make sure no one was snooping around to see what all the shooting was about, especially after dark.

Several days passed by and no one came around out of the ordinary. It was time to start over and see what would happen. We ate an early supper of beans and homemade bread, with wild honey and butter. This time Loretta and I rounded up the old blanket and went

to the edge of the field a little early. We drove some sticks in the ground and made sort of a pup tent this time. It was fun to be doing something on our own.

After sundown we watched the long shadows appear and waited for the hoot owls to start their relentless noises. The small screech owls were at it again, down by the creek. There must be a hollow tree where they lived. I wished everybody would shut up before they scared the deer away.

We watched as Dad went down across the field again. Mom took her stand about the same place as before, and we started our long waiting vigil.

Dad went through the same procedures like before. He cautiously checked the layout, climbed to the platform and rested his back against the tree trunk. A twig or two removed gave him a better view of the salt lick. A person's reactions while playing the waiting game, being still and quiet, the anticipation of what lies ahead was almost overwhelming. What a feeling!

But he was much more sure of himself this time. His aim should be more certain, and he pulled down on the salt block for practice. Time marched on. Night birds were sure making a lot of noise. In fact a screech owl lit in the top of the tree Dad was in. The little guy was really making a fuss. But his excited twittering could mean a warning of some animal approaching. Sure enough! Three deer came walking up to the salt lick. The first one seemed larger than the other two, but it didn't have horns. It might be an old barren doe, one who is unable to produce a fawn. They are generally in better shape and look darker in color than other deer.

Dad raised the gun and pointed it toward the deer's head. The white tape on the front sight helped sight it in. It was standing broad side. He aimed at its head and lowered the barrel a couple inches. A little pressure on the trigger and the blast was deafening. Fire belched from the gun, and the smell of burned gun powder was evident. The deer was down and thrashing around.

From that moment Dad was very calm and wasn't nervous. He carefully descended his perch, rested the gun against a tree, and walked over to cut the deer's throat so it would bleed out good. With great effort he dragged it down to a grassy area, out of sight, and headed for home.

That night, Loretta and I were ready and braced for anything, well almost. When the gun went off, the loud explosion destroyed all train of thought. Loretta screamed and Mom halfway threw her arms up, and I heard her say, "Oh dear, I hope he got something."

We watched from our pup tent. Minutes started rolling by. I saw a movement coming our way. Dad was walking fast toward us, swinging both arms as though it helped him move faster. The heavy gun didn't seem to slow his progress. I ran to meet him. All he said was, "Here, take the gun. I got one. Where is Mom?"

The two of them disappeared into the dark night across the field toward the salt lick. Even though Loretta and I were all alone now it didn't seem to make much difference. We were too excited to be afraid.

We never took our eyes off the open field as we quietly waited. Pretty soon we saw them coming. What we noticed first was Mom's apron. A cool breeze caused it to move around. The deer was heavy. The loose plowed ground made it more difficult to drag. They stopped to rest quite often.

Dad had spent some time preparing the barn for the night he hoped to skin out a deer. Cracks were covered so lantern light couldn't be seen from the road side. A set of rope blocks were rigged up, one end tied to a beam overhead, and a gambrel was handy. (A

gambrel is a stout piece of wood about thirty inches long and two-by-two inches wide. It is tapered at each end. When an animal is hanged to be skinned, the ends are attached to the hind legs by making a hole between the tendons and the leg behind the knee. The ends are slipped through, a hook on the rope-blocks is anchored to the center, and the animal can be pulled up easily.)

I ran to the barn and opened the door wide. They hurriedly dragged the deer through. Mom heaved a sigh of relief. The first phase of our venture was over. Now for the tough part.

Mom quickly touched a match to a kerosene lantern and attached it to a rope hung down from a beam. Dad rigged up the gambrel and tugged on the rope to see if everything was strong enough to hold the heavy deer. He pulled it up so its nose was just off the floor and tied the end of the rope to a barn brace.

It didn't take long to dress the deer out and skin the hide off. Mom held the flashlight so Dad could see better in close places. When the job was done the insides were in a small wash tub, and the hide lay in a heap nearby. Mom carefully put the heart and liver in a separate pan. The next step was to pack the deer to the house and prepare the meat to be canned.

The large carcass caused the kitchen table to look rather small. Mom took one more look around to make sure the window blinds were pulled and chucked some more wood in the kitchen stove.

The meat was cut up into hams and shoulders. The side meat was put to one side on a counter top. Dad carefully cut out the back strap, or tenderloin, from the backbone. Mom put it to soak in cold salt water. It would be fried up for breakfast. Mom had placed two dishpans at the end of the table. Three butcher knives were sharpened. All the meat had to be cut into one inch chunks. The meat would be put in quart fruit jars and filled to within a couple inches of the top. The sealed jars would be placed in a tub filled with water and set to boil until the meat was cooked. There was a lot of tedious work to be done.

Dad removed the bone from a ham and shoulder, and Mom started cutting strips. She showed me how to cut them into small chunks, careful not to cut my fingers. Loretta stood by and tossed the pieces into a dishpan.

Dad left the house and went to take care of the hide and innards. He had dug and covered a hole out back. He put hide and all in and covered it with a few inches of dirt. After the meat was taken from the bones, they would be added and the hole filled in.

He took a large tree branch and dragged it over the soil that had been disturbed by dragging the deer, and camouflaged disturbed areas. When he returned to the kitchen we were ready to start canning.

The jars were submerged in boiling water, hot and ready. Jar lids were heated in a smaller kettle. Loretta and I watched as Mom started filling the jars. Salt and water were added. Caps were put on, and the rings were screwed down tight. The glass jars were already warm so they wouldn't break when put back in hot water. The meat was supposed to cook a certain length of time.

We continued to cut meat and fill more jars until the first batch was ready. Dad helped take the heavy, slippery containers from the hot water. They were placed on a sturdy shelf that was covered with a dish towel. I remember counting fourteen jars full of meat. Mom covered them so cool air wouldn't blow directly on the hot jars. Batch number two was almost ready.

Us two kids experienced the most exciting day of our lives. Tonight was the latest either of us had ever been allowed to stay up. But Loretta was showing signs of drowsiness and went to sleep in her chair. Dad carefully picked her up and carried her to bed. A while later, sleep seemed like a good idea. I said good night and hit the hay.

The sun was high when I woke up. Things were quiet for that time of day except for my dog. He had a digger squirrel treed and was making an awful fuss.

I yanked my clothes on and climbed into my shoes. Loretta heard me thumping around and came to see what was up.

Out in the kitchen we expected to see jars filled with meat every where, but there was nothing. Everything was clean and in place just like an ordinary day.

The folks were sitting at the table sipping coffee. They looked worn out and weary. The meat canning and clean-up had taken most of the night. I guess the worst part was waiting for the last batch to finish cooking.

Mom had cleaned up the kitchen and stored jars of meat in a safe hiding place while Dad finished up outside. Bones were dumped into the hole where the hide and innards were, then covered with dirt and trampled down. No one could see where the ground had been disturbed. Everything else was put in place and restored back to normal. At last we could enjoy the fruits of our labor. We didn't call it venison. It was deer meat because it was so hard to come by.

We sat at the kitchen table eating a leisure breakfast. Us kids were reminded again about keeping quiet. If the wrong people had the slightest idea we shot a deer out of season, hard telling what might happen.

CHAPTER TWO
HILLBILLY GOAT

We lived at our nice home until the following August of 1933. The depression years were rough times. There were hundreds of people who were a lot worse off than we were. Their worst problem was lack of food. But we were some of the lucky ones. There was plenty of beans, potatoes and chicken eggs. Later on, a cow supplied us with milk and butter. If it wasn't for some deer meat now and then, I'm not sure how we would have made it.

In early summer that year my Grandfather, Monroe Gorden, came to visit for a couple of days. He wanted to know if we would like to move to his farm. Being alone, it would help him out a lot, and would be a better place to get a start. The idea sounded exciting. And it would be a much better place to spend the winter months ahead.

My Grandfather owned 160 acres two miles east of Beagle. There was a big two-story house with lots of rooms. A porch went across the front of the house with another structure on top called a veranda. Looked like two porches, one on top of the other.

The barn would hold many tons of hay and shelter lots of cows. The huge timbers were held together with long, handmade wooden pegs, or dowels. There were smaller buildings to house chickens and hogs. At one side of the corral was a corn crib.

It was a strange-looking building. The sides were made of two by four lumber. Each board was spaced an inch apart and stood on end. The sides slanted out so the top of the crib was wider than the bottom by about two feet. Both ends were solid and the roof weather proof. The shucked ears of corn were well ventilated to prevent dampness and mold. Near the house was a woodshed and shop. A smokehouse stood about fifty feet away from the kitchen door. It was used to cure and house the meat from seven or eight hogs at one time.

The old home place was very special to Mom. She was nine years old when the house was built. That was another thing that helped us decide to live there. When moving day came along it was truly like moving back home for her.

Before winter closed in we had acquired another milk cow. We had two head now. The new one would have a calf soon. There were lots of chickens and turkeys running around the barnyard. I counted five head of hogs rooting around in the hog pen. Most of the animals were there when we moved in.

People who lived on a farm like we did had no trouble making it if they had any get-up-and-go at all. There were so many things that could be done to earn a good living. A farmer could cause a lot of things to happen that would benefit his family, and have enough left over to help someone else. Once in awhile strange things happened without cause.

As an example, an elderly couple stopped by one day to visit, and exchange ideas and happenings of current events. Loretta and I ran to meet them as they drove up to the yard gate. There was a lot of howdy-doing and "my how you kids are growing", and so on. I noticed a funny sound coming from the back seat of their car. I peeked in and saw two baby goats nestled in a paste board box.

The two little animals were about the cutest critters Loretta and I had ever seen. The old folks brought them along, hoping we might adopt the babies. Us kids would have lots of fun trying to raise them. They had to be fed by bottle until they gained some growth.

With a little shrug of a shoulder Dad consented. But it was up to us kids to feed and take care of the little guys. After more visiting and a few cups of coffee later the two people departed for home.

The baby goats were white and seemed quite pert. Loretta and I had to figure out what to name them. With a little coaching from the sidelines, we decided to call them Tom and Jerry. Mom helped rig up a couple bottles with nipples. She showed us how to warm the milk to the right temperature. They both learned quickly when meal time came around.

Every thing went well for a week or so. The two goats would play and cut up around the yard much to our delight. But one day Jerry didn't respond too well. He wouldn't eat right and laid down a lot. He got weaker by the day. One morning we found the baby goat laying dead by the box he slept in. We told Mom what happened. We carried Jerry out to the edge of the pasture and buried him beneath an oak tree.

Tom adopted Loretta and I as his playmates. He ran and jumped, twisting every which way and landing on his feet, bouncing like a ball. He could climb up on anything except the house and barn roofs. And he had more energy than two goats put together. He was healthy enough to live and make history.

Every where us kids went, Tom was sure to follow. He ate leftover biscuits, hot cakes and most anything else he was offered. The little goat grew fast. We noticed two tiny horns sprouting, one at each side of his head. Every day they seemed to get longer. And his once-cute little ways soon became rougher and meaner. He loved to butt against things. Our dog and cat learned to stand back when Tom began ramming around.

One day I was raking oak leaves into piles in the yard. The shuffling leaves drew his attention. He thought for sure I wanted to play. Tom came toward me. With his neck bowed and head down he started a fast trot. I kicked leaves in his face but never slowed his pace. His head slammed against my shin bones and knocked me flat. I jumped up as he charged again. But that time I belted him across the ribs with a rake handle. That changed his train of thought, and he went bouncing off toward the barn to try something else.

Seemed like from then on Tom got himself into a series of events that would eventually be a turning point in his life. One day my Grandfather was working on the yard fence. He had put in a new post and started to attach the wire. He looked down and noticed a shoe lace had come undone. He bent down on one knee to retie the string. Tom had been sampling the leaves on the grapevines and decided to try something that tasted better. He came around the corner of the smokehouse and saw a tempting sight.

My Grandfather was bent over, busily tying the shoe lace. Tom bowed his neck, raised up slightly on his hind legs and headed straight for a new target. I was sitting on the porch steps and watched the horrible scene in shocked amazement. No way could the goat's advance be stopped, nor would it have done any good to shout a warning. The elderly man was hard of hearing. But in another way I couldn't resist watching to see what would happen after impact.

My Grandfather was about to stand up. Tom was thumping along full blast, his tail up and head down. He slammed in to the old man and hit so hard it nearly extracted his false teeth. He fell forward and grabbed a fence post for support. It took an instant for everything to register. But when it did, my Grandfather got up and threw everything he could latch onto. The goat circled around, dodging rocks and chunks of clodded dirt. The old man tried to kick him, but Tom was too agile and nimble. Grandpa chased the goat

around the house, cussing a blue streak. The animal won the race and headed for open country. After that I wouldn't have given two cents for Tom's chances for survival.

He never had a lick of sense when it came to causing trouble. He butted my Dad behind his knees one day and almost upset him. He chased the chickens and turkeys and watched for my dog, to tackle him. Grandpa threw rocks and sticks at him every time he ventured anywhere near.

One afternoon Dad and I went to the barn to do the feeding. Tom was nearby, nibbling on a fence board. He told me we had to do something with that trouble-making goat. And to substantiate his feelings, several incidents were discussed. He might hurt Loretta or start picking on Mom. It was impossible to keep our pet out of sight and away from trouble.

Loretta and I felt sad. But somehow we had to find Tom another home. Maybe I should talk it up around school. There ought to be someone who would take him off our hands. The folks thought it was a good idea too. It might be the only way to save Tom's life.

People lived a leisure life in the Rogue River Valley. Most every one walked to school. The lucky ones rode horses or a mule. One family came to school most of the time riding in a buggy pulled by a team of horses. There was a nice barn in one corner of the Antioch school ground where the animals were kept during the day. Once in awhile I could hook a ride but not very often.

At school I told some older kids about Tom and what a nice pet he was, and never mentioned a thing about why I wanted to trade him off. I heard two boys talking about my goat. They came over and ask some more questions. Was he healthy? How old was he, etc.? Sounded like maybe they would take him but they had to consult their Dad and uncle first. They would have an answer tomorrow.

My folks were delighted. I told Grandpa the news and that was the first time I heard him laugh in a long time. He became very talkative and friendly for a change. At least, maybe he wouldn't have to kill the ornery goat after all.

On my way to school the next day I cut across country to avoid other kids. The two boys were already there and had put the horses in the barn. They saw me coming and headed me off at the schoolhouse steps. They had permission to take Tom off my hands but I had to agree on a trade. The boys owned a young pig, and they figured it would be a fair bargain. But there were certain conditions to consider. The deal was sight unseen. My first question was, "Is he still alive?" They assured me he was. It was a boar hog about three weeks old. He was black in color. They advised that I might have to bottle feed him for awhile.

Something was fishy, and the whole truth wasn't told. But they would probably be the proud owners of a healthy goat. I would tell them yes or no tomorrow. But first my folks should hear about the whole thing.

Dad and Mom figured it would be the best thing to do. Whether the deal turned sour or not, maybe Tom would at least get a good home, because he had sure worn out his welcome around our farm.

The two boys were delighted to hear that all systems were go. That afternoon when school let out they gave me a ride home on their buggy. We talked a lot about the goat but very little was said about the pig except it was still alive when they left home that morning. I had a feeling that my part of the deal would be on the short end of the stick. But, even so, Tom would be the winner.

At home, Dad gave me a strong piece of hemp rope to lead Tom with. His horns were at least five inches long. They curved back and turned outward. It was easy to guide Tom around because the rope couldn't slip off.

My goat was delighted when the rope was attached to his horns. It was like a new game to him. He bounced around as I guided him along, careful not to hurt his neck. I headed across the field toward my goat's new home. Loretta was watching as we departed across the field.

It was about a mile to where the boys lived. We had to cross a rail fence to get there. For Tom it was something else to climb up on and look around. Once on the other side, I saw the two boys standing near a shed where their hogs were kept. I'm sure they were anxious to close the deal.

When I approached, the eldest boy was holding a small, black pig in his hands. I handed the rope over and he handed me the scrawny little animal. I couldn't believe my eyes. He laid across my hands, weak and lifeless. His tail hung straight down and he was bent in the middle. His ears flopped down over the sides of its head. His ribs showed and reminded me of two tiny fire ladders. But, at least, he was breathing.

Without a word, I headed for home. The rail fence was hard to climb, holding the pig. I leaned over a rail and laid the lifeless body on the ground. Just in case it came to life. I hurried to the other side. I banged my knee on the end of a fence rail and tore a three-cornered hole in my shirt. But the little pig never moved. It was a sight-unseen trade, and a deal was a deal, regardless.

I crossed the field toward home trying to figure out how come two fellers would cheat me like that. It would be a miracle if the skinny little thing lived through the night.

Back home Mom saw me trudging along carrying the lifeless, black form in my arms. She met me at the kitchen door. One look at my trade, and she knew what was ailing our new pet. The mother had given birth to thirteen babies, and there were only twelve faucets. Number thirteen was out of luck and nearly starved to death. Whether or not my pig died, at least Tom's life was spared.

Mom knew what to do. She rounded up a baby bottle and rubber nipple. A red-hot wire enlarged the hole so milk would flow free. A kettle was placed on the stove and filled with water. She filled the bottle with milk and put it in the water. As it reached a boiling point, Mom tested the temperature of the milk. It had to be just right.

My mother taught me something that day that has always stuck with me. No matter how bleak things appear, never give up. Be optimistic and think positive. Take action, stand back, and see what happens.

She sat near the wood cook stove and wrapped the weak little pig in her apron. The milk was getting to be the right temperature. She turned its head so the tiny snout was pointed up and carefully opened its mouth. In an instant the starving little animal caught on. He gurgled, coughed, and slobbered. Half the milk had disappeared. The nipple was removed from its mouth. That was the first time we heard him grunt. He wanted more nourishment. Mom told me that too much milk at first might cause him to get sick. We should wait a half hour or so and let him eat some more.

Meanwhile I found a paste board box that might work to keep the baby in. Mom added some clean rags. It made a dandy bed, and it fit underneath the cook stove to keep him warm.

Just before we turned in that night we gave him another shot of milk. Loretta got to hold the bottle. His sides bulged out, and he looked pot-bellied. His ribs were quite prominent.

In a couple days our pig started showing signs of life. He quickly learned when feeding time was, and would start grunting and moving around.

Dad built a pen in one corner of the back porch. The pig was becoming so lively, the box under the stove wouldn't keep him subdued anymore. Our pet was snapping out of it. All he needed was nourishment.

Three weeks went by. A place was prepared at the hog pen, away from the other pigs. I have never seen an animal come to life and grow like this little black boar hog did.

One day at school the boys ask how the pig was. They seemed surprised when they learned what happened, that it was full of life and growing fast. I inquired how Tom was faring. They didn't tell me too much, but I gathered that he had managed to make enemies with everyone, including most of the barnyard animals. Even their big Rhode Island Red rooster took flight when he saw the goat walking his way.

My Dad gave me some more advice about the pig. He told Loretta and I not to give it a name like we did Tom, or cause him to be a special pet. Because he would eventually end up in the smoke house along with several other butchered hogs.

I walked out toward the barnyard with Dad to watch while he fed the livestock. My black pig started racing around when he saw us coming. Feed time was here. Dad told me about an operation that had to be performed on the male hog so it would grow better, and the meat would be good. But he must wait until the moon was the right sign to avoid complications.

Meanwhile, Tom was going through a learning process. The boys built a harness for him, and he was learning to pull a two-wheeled cart. The goat learned fast. After a couple run-aways, he settled down, and even quit being a show-off for awhile.

The weeks and months rambled on. Everything came to life in the spring. Flowers were blooming, fruit trees were beautiful, and vast carpets of green spread over the pasture land and hills. Summertime wasn't too far away, and best of all, no school for at least three months.

It is really neat to live on a farm, especially this time of year. Tom turkeys were strutting around, their tail feathers spread wide, showing off to the hens. Chickens were singing and wallering in the dry loose dirt around the barnyard. A few were clucking away as they guided their brood of babies around, teaching them how to catch grasshoppers and bugs. One of our milk cows was nursing a feisty baby calf in a corral by herself.

The hogs were lolly-gagging around, rooting up something to chew on or spread out in the shade. Our hog had settled down and was slowly becoming full-grown. Boy, was he big.

That year, we raised seven hogs to butcher for winter's meat. The old-timers overfed at least one, so it would be exceptionally overweight. The extra fat would provide enough lard for cooking throughout the year. Feed was rationed to the others so the meat would be more lean.

Our hog was the chosen one. Loretta and I tossed him apples and pears. His trough was worn smooth and clean. We didn't dare keep feed in it all the time because, being a hog, he would consume too much and die of a packed stomach. But he got three rations a day instead of one like the others.

Tom goat grew from a nuisancy mischief to a destructive menace. In fact, his life was on the line again. It became so serious, the boys were warned, if the goat wasn't gone within a week, he would be put to rest like any other marauding animal.

This would be the second time Tom's life was in jeopardy. He didn't mean no harm, he was only doing what a normal healthy goat would do. But the boys had to get rid of their pesky pet.

Once again, at Antioch school, they attempted to get shed of Tom like I had done. Each one was asking around. After all, they wanted to get all they could in a deal like that. He was trained to pull a cart, but that was the only thing going for him. The cart was extra. No one had any money, so the deal had to be a trade. And finally they hit on another sight-unseen, shaky bargain.

Tom was delighted to be doing something different. A rope was attached to his horns. The other end was tied hard and fast to the rear of the buggy, and down the road they went.

The goat was reluctant to stay cooped up in the barn all day, but there was no choice. He at least had company. Besides the two horses, there were two Barred Rocks and four Bantie chickens penned in a wire cage, sitting in a corner.

After school, the two boys tied the coop filled with chickens on the back of the buggy and headed up the road toward home. Tom and his new owner were making good time as they disappeared over a rise heading south. That was the last I ever saw or heard about Tom. He no doubt was intended to become part of his new owners larder to supplement their diet of beans and potatoes.

Our little pig had emerged into a monster in size. All he did was lay in the shade, sleep and eat. The other hogs were somewhat livelier and rooted around more.

Signs of winter began to show. Ground squirrels were running to and fro at the corn crib, collecting kernels of yellow corn to fill their caches. Red-headed woodpeckers were pounding away on tree trunks and shingled roofs of the house and other buildings. They would pick up anything that resembled an acorn and cram it into a newly drilled hole. I have seen buckets of a mixture of acorns and small, round rocks emerge from a hollow oak tree when it was cut down for firewood. The bark on pine trees was dotted with acorns and rocks that persistent birds had crammed in holes from the ground up.

One thing we always enjoyed so much was the fall colors. The reds and yellows, purple and brown leaves were everywhere you looked. There was one particular shrub us kids learned to identify. The reddish-brown leaves were different. Poison oak was on our "hands-off" list.

Soon, two or three days would be set aside for hog-butchering time. It took a lot of preparation for such a task. Once we got started there was no stopping until the last chunk of meat was put down in salt or some means of curing.

When the hogs were butchered, what was once a weak, lifeless, runt pig dressed out at four hundred and thirty pounds. The lean hogs weighed around two hundred and eighty to three hundred pounds each.

The trade I made, a goat for a half dead pig, was the best deal I ever made. Our Grandfather would tell the story and slap his knees as he laughed and bragged about how the two neighbor boys got my goat. It was all true, except for one thing. Every time he told the story the hog got a little heavier!

CHAPTER THREE
BEANS WERE ROUGH

During the depression years of the late twenties and thirties, there was a common expression made by the country people: "Beans are rough, beans are tough, any more beans, we'd have enough." Sometimes money was too scarce to buy beans, so most people grew their own. But our parents were among the more fortunate.

In 1933, Dad submitted a bid to be a mail carrier. It was called a rural route. Mail would be delivered three days a week and would include at least fifty customers. He would have to drive about thirty five miles, round-trip. Mom was designated as his substitute driver. His bid for five hundred dollars a year was acceptable.

Things were looking up as far as money went. Mom carried the mail during good weather, and Dad got a steady summer job near home. Loretta and I went with her and got acquainted with lots of new people.

In a couple of years they had saved money to make a down payment on an eighty acre tract of land southwest of the Beagle Post Office. The total price was five hundred dollars. The deal was one hundred dollars down, and payments were five dollars a month until paid for, with no interest. We built a house on a rise about a hundred feet from a fast flowing spring.

Good fortune followed us all along the way. We accumulated a team of horses and a walking plow. Dad taught me how to turn the sod with the single moleboard plow, and how to smooth it out to plant corn.

We had to tighten our belts now and then to make payments, but at least things were on the upward trend.

About a mile east of where we lived, my aunt and uncle built a new home. It was located on the side of a hill, near the top. Their family was fairly large and, like us, it was quite a task to keep food on the table and shoes on their feet.

One of my cousins, Don Case, and I got well acquainted. We hunted and fished together in the surrounding hills and streams, including Rogue River. In later years, he and I were more like brothers than we were cousins.

Don was a year older than I was. We went to school at Antioch together. He graduated a year ahead of me. I was always about three jumps behind him. He owned the first bicycle, first car, and of course, the first steady job, and had the most money. He worked on a cattle ranch. Roping, riding, and romping with cows was made to order for him.

He was a man around six foot tall, with broad shoulders and ruddy complexion, and had dark hair, blue eyes, and his nose was slightly flat; that affected his speech a little. Don dearly loved to box and scrap around some. It was a rarity to see him without a smile or pleasant look on his rugged face. I kidded him about being a grinning fighter.

Don dressed western. His hat was a black, John B. Stetson that had a nine inch crown with a five inch brim. He wore western shirts and Levis. The straight-cut legs went down over the tops of his high-healed cowboy boots. Don was slightly bow-legged and stood as straight as a ramrod. He wore a wide leather belt with a shiny buckle at his left side. He always carried his billfold in the left front pocket just under the belt buckle. When he walked away, the first thing you noticed was the corner of a red bandana hanging down

from his right hip pocket. He said he wore it that way for a quick draw if he felt a sneeze coming on.

Don and I were out stomping the hills one late fall day, and we came to a nice spring of water. It gurgled from a big dimple in the ground and worked its way along a flat, narrow draw. The water had washed a channel that was crooked, meandering back and forth for a hundred feet or so, then dropped off a rock ledge, causing a neat waterfall.

He always tried to improve such beauty spots by cleaning out the source and removing debris from the main channel. It would be perfect to build a cabin nearby and live here.

The sun was warm and felt so good. We stretched out to rest awhile and talk about the future. The subject came up about food and a dwindling lack of meat. I told Don that my Dad had talked about killing a deer but didn't know the country well enough to set up a salt lick, and the only spring he knew about was the one near the house. Deer never ventured in that close because of my dog.

Don slowly rose up into a sitting position, then leaned back on his left elbow to face me. He reached over and snapped a dry limb from a bush and smoothed off the top of an old gopher mound. The four directions were etched in to indicate north, east, south, and west. A couple crooked lines were roads and a hole poked in the ground was a spring. He explained carefully where this place was, then smoothed the dirt flat and started making another sketch.

The place he drew used to be a homestead many years ago. There were no buildings, just rock and rotted timbers were all that was left. The deeper lines on the dirt map indicated main roads. The shallow ones were trails that followed ridge tops made by trappers. Three holes were springs. Several toothpick-sized sticks were arranged at the end of an old road that indicated an apple orchard.

Don explained in detail how we could go to either place and kill us a deer, but it would have to be a nighttime hunt. The first sketch he drew of the spring was a half mile off the road. We would get settled in a big Laurel tree at dusk, sit quietly, and see what happened. At the homestead site, our perch would be an apple tree about the center of the orchard.

Boy Howdy! What any exciting adventure it would be. Don had learned the country by following along with his Dad or older brother. They ran trap lines every winter and scouted the country for miles around.

Before we set a time, the first thing, we had some scouting to do ourselves. It was against the law to hunt deer or any wild game out of season, of course, and to go out spot-lighting for one was more unforgivable.

As we stood up, stretched and got ready to leave our little beauty spot, Don pointed out several deer tracks as we walked along, and other things to watch for were discussed. Dusty roads and trails could tell a story that caused a night hunter to be cautious. Watch for man tracks. Could be a game warden or an old farmer out hunting for his lost cow. Deer tracks would indicate a good area to hunt. The interesting things I was learning from an experienced man meant so much to me, and his teaching has stuck with me down through the years to this day. From Don, I learned what the word caution really meant.

Saturday morning was a perfect day to start out on our scouting mission. I walked up to Don's home, and we sat around, making plans and drinking coffee. It was best to venture out in late morning because State Police or local neighbors would be more apt to be wandering around. It took law enforcement people time to get organized and farmers had lots of chores to take care of first.

Don and I headed out on foot about ten o'clock. The most lethal weapons we carried were two sling-shooters each and a couple pockets full of rocks. We resembled most teenage country boys, out to explore the tall and uncut. It was the way of life for most hill folks to learn all they could about the surrounding area where they lived.

In a couple of hours we sat down under an oak tree to see if there was much traffic passing through the country. We were up on a knoll and could see where two main roads crossed at the Beagle Post Office. It was easy to see a car driving along the dusty roads.

I was plunking away with my sling shot, sighting in on a fence post across the road. My score so far was three hits out of five tries.

Don tapped me on the shoulder and pointed toward Beagle. He had been watching a dark-colored pickup that had driven up about ten minutes ago. It was just pulling out, and was heading our way. Being a strange vehicle, it had all the earmarks of a Game Warden's transportation. If he stopped I was to let Don start the conversation, and without being too obvious, look at the rig and memorize every detail about it: small dents or scratches, maybe a cracked window, even the license plate number. If we ever saw that pickup parked somewhere, nine times out of ten, it would be the same driver.

Sure enough, the pickup pulled over and stopped. A young man emerged, wearing a uniform and badge, and a revolver hung down from his right side. He carried a Thermos bottle and a small paper bag. We stood up to show friendliness, introduced ourselves, and the three of us sat down to visit.

He was new to the country and was out looking around, trying to learn more about his area of responsibility. So far, Mt. Pitt and the two Table Rocks were the only landmarks he knew. In the course of conversation he asked questions about where we lived, how long, and what we did for a living.

Don had a gift for gab when he wanted to, and then there were times when he wouldn't say much at all. But he was a deep thinker. He tactfully maneuvered the conversation around and found out exactly what the young game officer was up to. We learned that the Postmaster at Beagle was an informant, although the words were never said. They were good friends, and he always stopped there to visit. We learned about someone who had been spot-lighting a deer at a spring northeast of Sam's Valley, and gunshots were heard one night near where we lived.

While the Game Warden ate lunch, we gleaned a lot of valuable information. We knew where he would be for the next few days, and what he was looking for. Don even drew a map in the dirt to show some unfamiliar roads.

Soon the man pulled out and left us in a cloud of dust. Don pointed toward the ground at the side of the road. There were the prints of his shoe soles plain as day. If we saw them again somewhere else, it meant he might be in the same country.

Before we left, Don drew another sketch in the dirt. Tomorrow night we were going to try our luck. There was no moonlight, and from all appearances, the weather should be in our favor.

There was a spring about one and a half miles northeast of Beagle. Its water was used to irrigate with by a homesteader years ago. There weren't any trees to climb and wait, but a good blind could be built out of chaparral brush.

At the supper table that evening I told my folks what Don and I had in mind. We were excited, because of memories about the first deer Dad had shot a few years back. The only difference, I was the one to actually be at the scene and help.

Don and I left his home an hour or so before sundown. We cut across country, and for the first half mile there was a twenty acre field of corn between us and the Beagle Post Office. Besides, most people were eating supper at that time of day.

There wasn't a car in sight when we slipped across the Beagle Road. There were no visible trails, and the country was flat and heavily wooded.

The sun was down when we arrived at the spring. The only tracks were those of deer, a coyote or two, and one raccoon. We propped our heavy guns against an oak tree and picked a place, downwind, to build a brush blind. Don and I were settled in and ready before dusk.

Along the east side of the spring was an old page wire fence. It had been stapled fast to oak trees, and wood had grown over the wire. There were patches of chaparral and numerous white oak trees scattered up the draw. There were a few tall Ponderosa Pine trees nearby. It sounded wintery as the evening breeze blew through the branches.

Meanwhile Don coached me on the fine points about night hunting. Do not make any sudden moves, like slapping a mosquito. Just slowly brush him loose. Once we were settled down there would be no movement or shifting around to ease a cramped muscle. If I had to talk, lean close and do so in a slow whisper.

It all seemed very simple. I was sitting on dry ground and propped up against a chaparral bush, comfortable enough to take a nap. The slightest movement would prevent a deer from coming to the spring.

Don sat about six feet away, facing the opposite direction. Neither of us had to turn our heads to watch. I became aware of the late evening noises. The countryside seemed to be buzzing with activity. Night birds were swooping about, crickets chirping, and a pack of coyotes started yipping. The Great Horned owl threw in his two bits worth with his loud hooting up on the ridge top. A big black carpenter ant started working its way up inside my pants leg, and I got a scolding when I knocked him loose.

I had never seen a man sit still in one spot for such a long time. Don practiced what he preached and always set a good example. We waited. It didn't seem possible to be so comfortable at first, and less than ten minutes later, be miserable beyond words. But I never moved as the noisy roar of an airplane traveled north overhead.

Soon, certain muscles seemed to turn numb. At the height of my discomfort there was a muffled thump to our right. Don moved slightly to face that direction. Some deer had jumped the page wire fence. Don leaned close and said, "Get ready." We raised the gun barrels and positioned our two cell flash lights. The bright beam was frightening. It split the darkness in two different directions. Three big deer were looking straight toward us. We squeezed the triggers at the same time. Two streaks of flame belched from the rifles. Gun powder smoke filled the air. The deer disappeared.

Don jumped up and was shining his light where a deer should be laying before I could get loosened up. One deer had jumped the spring, and two crashed into the fence. Man, what a racket. But there weren't any drops of blood or loose hair laying around anywhere.

What had happened, our guns were powerful, and at close range we should have aimed lower down on the target. As it was, the bullets went over their heads and missed.

There was no use hanging around any longer. With all that fracas I doubt if a deer would come by for the next couple days. Besides we better move out just in case someone came looking for us. We pumped the shells from our gun barrels and headed out into the night without the use of our lights. We left the spring and walked along a different route. There was no use taking a chance of being followed.

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In a few minutes we were half a mile away from Chapman spring. Soon we came to a split rail fence. By that we knew exactly where we were. From here on home there was no reason to hurry.

Just over the fence were tree stumps scattered everywhere. No doubt a place where a farmer had cut his winter's supply of wood. We sat on a couple stumps to rest and watch for cars travelling along Beagle and Antioch Roads.

The dry grass was a foot tall. Even though it had rained some, the last few days were clear and hot. Everything was bone dry, and a forest fire would really burn fast and hot.

Don used the toe of his boot to clear off an area about two feet square. He pulled a sack of Bull Durham tobacco from his shirt pocket and began the careful process of fashioning a cigarette. I could barely see the slow motion movements of his hands as he fashioned what he called a masterpiece. Tobacco was hard to come by, and care must be taken not to waste any. The price had gone up to five cents a bag.

I stepped close by and spread my coat tail so the flare of the match couldn't be seen. The stubby cigarette reminded me of a churn-dash calf, fat in the middle and skinny on both ends.

He raked a thumbnail across the brimstone of the match head. A tiny chunk flew off and landed on my left wrist. I dropped everything and grabbed for the burning ember. Light reflected off Don's face, displaying sheer disgust. I wasn't tough enough to stand a little pain. Besides that, if someone were looking our direction, they would know something fishy was going on. The smell of tobacco and burned paper filled the air. In a couple of minutes the remains of the gnarled piece of brown paper and tobacco were placed in the center of the prepared spot. The hot, smelly coals were ground into the dirt by a boot heel. With that task taken care of he stood up, stretched and said, "Let's go home, Slim."

At home I stepped through the door rather quickly. Mom squealed and Dad about swallowed some tobacco juice. Loretta must have heard me coming because she was almost to the door.

They listened carefully to every word when I told what happened. The first thing Dad had to offer was we didn't aim our guns low enough. The high-powered rifles were not accurate at close range. But Don and I would try again as soon as the echo of our guns that night had faded away.

CHAPTER FOUR
ROUGH AND TUMBLE

Winter time was fast approaching. The days were crisp and cool until early afternoon when the sun warmed things up. I love that time of year. Hay fever season was over, most flies and bugs were gone, and honey bees were really working.

Several days had passed since our last night hunt, and it was time to try our luck again. One reason for the waiting period was to be sure no one was keeping an eye on us. There were no rumors about hearing gun shots at night. No one had noticed the Game Warden's pickup patrolling the countryside. So, the time was right to try again.

Don had been sick with the flu a couple days and never felt like roughing it. But to break the monotony, we decided to try our luck on a daytime hunt. We got together at my place and discussed plans about where to go. He drew a map in the dirt, as usual, and was very descriptive.

By Don not feeling too pert, we decided to try a place called Harper Spring. It is located in a range of mountains that go south from the Umpqua Divide. It was a homestead years ago, and a few fruit trees were scattered here and there. Near a dilapidated old house was a fig tree that produced an abundance of fruit.

A road went within a hundred feet of the water source. But only one or two cars traveled it a day. Since Don wasn't feeling up to snuff, this would be a good bet. We had a fifty-fifty chance of bagging a deer, and I could go get some help from home if we did.

This was our first try on a daytime hunt. We had to be cautious the entire trip because to arouse suspicion might mean disaster. Our single shot twenty-two rifles shouldn't make much noise, especially with only one shot. That's all it would take to make a kill if placed right.

We planned to head for Harper Spring around nine the next morning. Most farmers were working their fields and would pay little attention if they noticed two boys walking along. We could stay out of sight most of the way by cutting across country through wooded areas.

It was chilly that morning, and it looked like it would be a nice day. Neither of us wore coats because after it warmed up they would be a nuisance. It would take at least two hours to get to the spring. We took our time. No reason to hurry because the day was young. Don sat down to rest more often but didn't seem to be suffering much.

Birds flew every direction as we walked past the old house. The spring came from the side of an intermittent stream. Thick brush and scattered pine trees hid it from view. But there was one deer trail that went right to the water from the upper side. The tread was punctured with the sharp hooves of deer. The smaller tracks were caused by tow-heads, this year's offspring. Larger tracks indicated several doe and a large buck or two. There was a single cow that ventured in to get a drink. She could belong to a farmer nearby. We must be extra cautious in case he came looking for her.

Don looked around and picked a spot where we could see the spring and had a good view of the road. With a few dead branches snapped off here and there we got set for a long wait.

Boy was this a different approach. Broad daylight, we could see each other and all the activity around us was hard to get used to. A squirrel spotted our presence and started a

constant chatter that would attract anyone's attention. I felt like winging a shot at the limb he sat on to scare him away.

Most times it is difficult to sit without moving for very long. But the warm sunshine and peaceful setting caused Don to fall asleep.

An hour passed by. My left leg felt as though it might fall off if I didn't move it. The slight shift of my body woke Don from a sound slumber. He carefully laid his hand on his gun, thumbed the hammer back and took careful aim. I was looking toward him because sometimes he did such things to break the monotony. Before he squeezed the trigger I looked toward where the gun was aimed. A nice-sized spike buck was watching us. His horns stood straight up about six inches, and the big ears were turned toward us. The long slim neck protruded above a rise at the edge of the road.

My heart was thumping, I didn't dare move, and I was speechless. The spell was broken when Don squeezed the trigger, and the deer went down. He had placed the bullet just below the head at the center of the animal's neck. The shot had severed the spinal cord, and the deer died instantly.

We jumped up and ran to where it fell. The animal was thrashing around and kicking violently. A hind hoof raked my shin bones as I tried to take hold and help move it out of sight. We dragged it down to the dry stream bed behind a clump of brush. Don reached for his knife to cut the deer's throat. But it wasn't there. When he changed clothes that morning he forgot and left it in his other pants. I had lost my knife a couple days before, so there we were. There was no way to bleed the dead deer out. From here on it was up to me to run for help. But at the very best it would be over an hour before my return. I hoped the meat wouldn't spoil.

I took a look at Don to make sure he was okay, then headed down the mountain road at a dog trot. Some of the shortcuts toward home were familiar. We had been along the route a few times after dark, and I made good time.

Mom had just stepped out of the house when I popped around the corner. She squealed and wondered what was going on. My first words were, "Don is ok." I got my breath and told her what had happened. She returned to the house and got a butcher knife and handful of cookies. Don might be hungry. She scribbled a note for Dad to find when he came home. We might be late.

Mom climbed behind the wheel, cranked the old car up and away we went. I sat forward on the edge of the seat and told the whole story. She was right in the spirit of things. We reached the main road and drove along about forty-five miles an hour. A big cloud of dust rolled up behind, and I could see oil smoke coming from the hood. Boy, were we moving along! We made it in record time.

Mom parked in a wide place, and pretended to be working on the car motor. I slipped up the road, walked past the house and down where Don was. If everything was okay, I would motion for her to drive on up and park in the driveway. If I hadn't made an appearance in five minutes, she would crank up and drive on past where we were. In half hour she would drift slowly by and check things out.

Don was okay, and I ran back to the road and motioned for Mom to come on up. The motor started with a roar, gears were meshed in, dirt and gravel flew from beneath the hind wheels when she let out the clutch. It was easy to back the car in to the driveway and down out of sight.

During the time I was gone, Don looked around in the house hoping to find something sharp enough to cut with. About all there was were broken bottles and scraps of China

plates. Some of the kitchen cabinet was still intact. He pulled a drawer open and there were several pieces of silverware. There were two rusty Case knives and a few other things. He found a rock outside and used it as a whet stone. With a little work he fashioned something sharp enough to penetrate the deer's hide and was able to bleed it out.

Don waited until the car was stopped and watched us get out. He came from behind a clump of brush above the spring and motioned me over toward a clump of debris. Beneath it was the spike buck and blood all over the place. Don told me what he had done.

In minutes the deer was loaded and we were on our way home. If someone saw us, no one would ever guess what was going on. Don sat in the back seat in a relaxed, reclining position with the back window down. Mom drove along slow as though we were looking for mushrooms. There wasn't another car in sight.

On the way Don told us about some things that happened while he lay quietly behind a clump of brush. Two big doe came to the spring to drink. Behind them was a dandy, four point buck who made his approach cautious and alert. After he walked away there was a forked horn and two tow-heads came for water.

Don's hiding place wasn't more than fifty feet away, downwind from the spring. What a spot to set up a camera! The excitement of seeing the deer, and the challenge to be still and quiet was like a tonic. After being sick as a dog two or three days before, the experience of a daytime hunt caused him to feel renewed and well again.

We drove down the lane toward my home. Dad was standing in the yard and watched our approach. He motioned us to follow. He walked toward the chicken house at the edge of the field. Behind it, out of sight, stood an oak tree. One of its limbs grew straight out about six feet before it turned up and formed numerous branches. It was about ten feet above ground and was a dandy place to skin out the deer. It had been used a few times to dress out hogs and a veal or two.

Dad had already rigged a set of rope blocks and gambrel to heist the deer and take care of the meat. It didn't take long for Dad and Don to get the job done. Mom, Loretta, and I watched as the men worked together. Soon we would all be enjoying the fruits of our labor. Buck meat, biscuits, potatoes and gravy was certainly a rib-sticking meal.

Don used a hand-saw to cut the carcass in half. He would carry his share home after dark. Dad would bury all the remains out in the timber. Everything would swing back to normal except for one thing: there would be some good wholesome food on the table again.

CHAPTER FIVE
LEARNING THE ROPES

The depression years weren't all bad, especially for those who tried to make do. People survived on common sense and help from a good neighbor. But the free-loaders and moochers didn't gain much when they came around.

There was a certain class of men we thought of as bums and tramps. A bum was truly a down-and-outer, even before bad times set in. They wouldn't make an effort to better themselves in any way, and would do their best to get something for nothing. Those were the ones who would turn a man in for anything, especially hunting out of season.

A couple bums who came by turned out to be World War I Veterans. They had a drinking problem, and no family or friends who cared. They needed help. When we learned about their past they got a square meal and a dry place to spend the night. They were honest men and never did take advantage of our hospitality.

The tramps were generally honest men who had no way to get a toe-hold. Jobs were scarce if not impossible to find. When one came by and asked for a handout he was willing to work for it. They would split wood, build fence or do any manual labor for food. They were willing to work before they ate. Eventually some were hired as steady hands because of their honesty and persistence.

Don and I were lucky. Our parents owned land and could raise a good part of the food we needed. We were law-abiding citizens and would defy anyone to challenge us under ordinary circumstances. The only exception was when our food supply got low. We were proud people and would never consider asking for welfare. Not when wildlife was plentiful and easy to get. Our night hunts did not deplete the deer population.

There was a hunting season for deer back then, just like in this day and age, except one thing. Hunting licenses cost two dollars each, and there was no such thing as a deer tag. Every legal hunter was allowed to kill three buck deer, regardless of size. For a family of five or six, that amount of meat would last through the worst part of the winter. Sometimes we would run out and were forced to do some night hunting.

Don and I didn't need a hunting license because of our age. But he had learned where every spring, dry well, and orchard was located in the north end of the Rogue River Valley. During hunting season I went with him every day he hunted and visited nearly every one of those places.

Most of the orchards still had a lot of fruit in the trees except pears. Deer and bear would clean up the fruit that fell and eat anything they could reach from the ground. But our favorite places to hunt during this season were the low foothills and buttes scattered along the valley floor and up close to the main mountain ranges. Big trophy bucks took advantage of the thick chaparral and manzanita brush. Black and white oak trees grew in abundance, scattered throughout the country. Ponderosa pine were the tallest trees and were handy to see from a distance. A hunter could locate one with a broken top and keep it in sight while walking through the thickets. It kept him from going in circles.

Don had talked about places like this. He had hunted with his Dad and older brother, and they ran trap lines together. Now I could hunt with him and learn the same country.

Many times he would emphasize his stories by tracing a map in the dirt with a stick. He had an idea about one of the special places to try because several bucks had been shot at that location. Don carefully drew a picture of the area as I watched. First an N.E.S.W.

were etched in to assure the right directions. Three circles with a curve in between each one indicated buttes and saddles. A long, crooked mark to the west was Snyder Creek. Square markers were farmhouses. A series of short marks made, side-by-side, were fences. He drew in a road by sliding his thumb along through the dirt. I studied the map carefully as Don told what part I would play when we went there to hunt. I was ready to go.

We took our big rifles and lined out. The area was about one and a half miles north of Beagle. I could see the three buttes from a distance and could imagine how many deer might be there. We climbed to a saddle between two of the highest buttes. There was a big white oak tree that grew at the north edge. Its large limbs were about ten feet above ground. Hunters had waited here before to watch for deer as they crossed the saddle from one butte to another.

Don told me what to do. He would climb the tree and set on a limb so as to be out of sight and have a good view where deer came through. I was to go around the north side of the butte to the west side and head right up over the top, and back down toward him. The next step surprised me. Below the summit I was to start making a lot of racket by snapping off dry limbs, tossing them every direction and crash through the undergrowth. Deer would be spooked from their beds and run across the saddle from one butte to the other. Don would nail one as he ran by.

With Don's instructions and explicit directions, it would be next to impossible to get myself lost. I would be the "dog" on our first round-up, and he would do the dogging next. We took turns.

I rechecked my gun to make sure there was no shell in the barrel. It was dangerous to walk through thick undergrowth with a loaded gun. It only takes a second to lever a shell into the chamber, ready to fire. I was ready to go.

Don nodded his head in approval, and in half a minute I was out of sight. It is difficult for a man to walk through thick brush and be quiet about it. But I didn't dare make any noise until I got almost to the top, up the west side. Don said it would take about twenty minutes.

The going was difficult. It was a little easier to slip through a clump of manzanita brush than a solid patch of chaparral. There was some poison oak but it was easy to spot. I stirred up a yellow jacket nest that caused me to make a little too much noise getting out of there.

Finally I reached the place where my quiet approach would cease and noise-making would start. It would be easier going, because I could climb over and crash through the tangled mass instead of making my way on hands and knees.

I leaned against an oak tree to rest some and look at my pocket watch. It had taken me fifteen minutes to get to the right place. Don had allowed me twenty. Timing was important for several reasons. If I wasn't on time, maybe I got lost or hurt, or almost anything could hold me up. If I was ten minutes late Don would start looking for me.

In exactly twenty minutes from my departure, I thought to myself, "Here goes nothing." It was easier going. I broke dead limbs and started throwing things right and left. On my way through a tall, half dead manzanita, a limb busted off and crashed to the ground. I banged my knee and tore my shirt in three places. By now I had gotten slapped in the face, scratched up and almost lost my hat a couple times. It was very irritating. But soon I walked out into the opening where Don was waiting. There were no shots fired.

When I came into full view he climbed down from his perch, sat down, and leaned back against a tree and told me what took place. I had spooked two big four-point bucks from their beds a couple minutes after the racket started. They crossed the saddle, one at a time. He put his sights on the first one but didn't pull the trigger. The second one crossed a little further away, but he didn't shoot. He got to his feet and motioned for me to follow to the south side of the opening and pointed at one set of tracks that were punctured deep in the soft soil. A few feet away was some more tracks the same size. He turned and pointed toward Snyder Creek. The roof of a cabin stuck up above some apple trees. Smoke was coming from the chimney. The two deer were almost in line with the farmer's home. He didn't dare shoot, because if he missed, the bullet from the high-powered gun could have reached the dwelling. If the bucks had crossed the saddle lower down, both could have been easily bagged.

Don had thought about everything. Safety was always foremost in his mind. From the oak tree limb he watched the man and his wife as they worked around their place even though they were a mile away. It could have been a disaster if he had pulled the trigger. I learned something else from him that I practice to this day. Always think things out carefully. Make sure a plan will work without damage to another man's property or cause someone to get hurt.

Our hunting trip was disappointing but we had done the right thing. Our parents would be proud. But there was plenty of time left in the day to try and flush those two big bucks from the brush yet. They could be hid on the smaller butte east of us.

Don drew another picture in the dirt. He knew where the best stand was and where the deer should be hiding. One of us would circle around down wind, and approach the smaller butte from the east side where it was open country with scattered clumps of oak trees. The one who played "dog" would wait a half hour, then start up over the top, tearing things up and making lots of noise.

It was my turn to sit on a stand but I talked Don into letting me do the dogging again because he knew the country best. At least I could relax for thirty minutes to make sure Don was ready. I rechecked my gun to make sure there wasn't a live shell in the chamber. It takes only a second to pump one in if need be. Don and I practiced doing just that, many times to prove a point. It never failed.

Again, I started toward the top of the butte. This time it seemed simpler. Boy, did the dry, dead limbs make a noise when they broke off. Just as I reached the top of the hill Don pulled the trigger. The blast was earsplitting, and echoes carried out through the hills. I stood waiting and nearly breathless and listened for another shot. He never missed his target so one shot surely knocked over a nice buck. I felt nervous and excited.

From the top, down toward where the shot was fired, I took advantage of openings and made good time. I saw Don standing near a clump of brush, looking downhill. Surely there was a buck deer lying there.

When Don approached the saddle he was just in time to get a glimpse of one of the big bucks as he disappeared, heading north. There was no use to shoot unless it was a good shot. No use to take a chance on wounding him.

By now I was wondering how come he fired the gun. As Don sat quietly waiting he saw a movement over to his left. As he watched, a big male coyote started across the opening. Don drew a bead on the animal's head and pulled the trigger. It fell in its tracks, kicking and thrashing around. Another predator had bit the dust.

We took our time skinning the animal out. There was a five dollar bounty on coyotes, and we might get something for the pelt. At least we weren't skunked completely.

Don and I hunted and fished together for several years. He was one of the best sportsmen I ever knew. From him I learned the ropes about the country we lived in and loved so much. We were in many a tough situation, and there were times when it was nip and tuck to make it, but, somehow we figured things out and came out on top.

CHAPTER SIX
PLAYING HOOKY

That fall we spent a lot of time cutting wood to get ready for a long, hard winter. We sold a few loads at three dollars a cord to help out on expenses.

Don and I went to school at Antioch. It was a three mile walk from home to the one room building. All eight grades were taught by one teacher. One year there were 46 kids who attended. Some 7th and 8th graders were 15 to 18 years old.

One morning in late November, the day started out rather warm. The sun shined bright, and there were no clouds in the sky. When I headed for school, I took my 22 rifle along just in case there might be something to shoot at.

About half a mile from school there was a pile of fence rails stacked near a big pine tree. It made a good place to stash a gun until after school.

I poked along the trail toward the main road. My thoughts were not on school subjects by a long ways. A blue jay took flight from a tree nearby. A well-aimed bullet brought it fluttering to the ground.

Just ahead of me there was another gunshot. I went around the edge of a hill and there was Don. He held up what was left of a red-headed woodpecker. We tossed the dead birds under a bush and sat down on the bank of a small stream. It seemed such a shame to waste a beautiful day like this sweating over an arithmetic problem in a stuffy old schoolhouse. And on top of that, the teacher was bound to be in a bad mood.

Don and I summed up all the bad things about going to school and compared them with the fun things we could cause to happen on a day like today. We decided to live dangerously and skip school, play hooky.

Don and I were set for a good day ahead. Our dinner buckets were full of food and were a nuisance to carry. But we could eat an early dinner and stash them along the way. The first thing we decided to do was cut across country to Snyder Creek, about a mile away. Mud turtles would be out on logs and rocks in the water, sunning themselves. We could catch a couple and carve our initials in the side of their shells. The ones at a distance made good target to sharpen up our marksmanship.

On our way, we bagged a porcupine and a couple digger squirrels. Don nailed a big jack rabbit as he ran across an opening. We took his front feet and hung them from our belts. Someone said that those who carried a rabbit's foot always had good luck. And it just could be we might need all the help we could get for playing hooky.

The steep banks of Snyder Creek showed up in the distance. It was exciting to hear the water as it cascaded down over bedrock and around sharp curves. It would be a cinch to slip up and get a pot shot at a few turtles.

I saw a movement through the trees in a field across the creek. It was a farmer dragging a spring tooth harrow over his alfalfa field with a team of horses. A gunshot would be a dead give-away of our presence.

We followed a deer trail that led down to the water's edge. Boy, did it ever look inviting! Don pulled his boots and socks off to check the water. It was cold, but so what. The warm sunshine would thaw us out. It would be such a shame not to go swimming.

Don said, "The last one in is a sissy." We scrambled to shed our clothes, long handles and all. In the process I tripped over a boot, it rolled down the bank into the water and

sank. My foot slipped in the wet grass and I fell in. Don jumped and belly-flopped in the deepest place in the pool.

When we got used to the first shock, it was fun. We dog-paddled from one side of the creek to the other. It was such a challenge, and so daring. After all, Christmas wasn't too far off, and to us, that was the dead of winter. If our folks knew what we were up to I'm not sure it would have been worth it.

In those days, most hillbilly boys never needed a swim suit. In fact I was twenty years old when I bought my first one. We made sure there were no girls around. There were times when someone stood guard, just in case.

We spent almost an hour splashing around. Why not enjoy life and live it up? The sun felt so good as its warmth dried our bodies. My boot that fell in the creek would be a little sloppy for awhile, but who cared.

We put our clothes on and made plans for the rest of the day. Our travels would lead us south until we came to the main road. (Dodge Rd.) The creek banks would shield us the most part of two miles. Our destination was an ancient cemetery. People were buried there many years before Don and I were born.

There were several huge black oak trees scattered around on a well-drained knoll. Different shrubs and trees grew from each grave. No doubt they were planted there in remembrance of a loved one.

We took off our hats and walked among the grave stones. Some names were familiar. They were members of well-known pioneer families who were the first settlers of the Rogue River Valley. We were careful about walking over a grave. We tip-toed along, talking in whispers. Seemed like it was irreverent to intrude on such a peaceful, quiet place. But we spent an hour looking around.

We went back across the creek and found a nice shady place to eat lunch. Boy, the fun we were having, and all the muscle-building exercise caused our dry peanut butter sandwiches to taste good. Wonder how those poor souls were doing at school? Suppose the teacher really missed us with all the other things she had to think of? Who cared!

A quarter of a mile or so away was a big oak tree. The trunk was at least four foot through and was forty or fifty feet tall. The tree top was loaded with black birds. The sun caused their feathers to glisten. Their yellow eyes looked like dots of polished gold. What a mass of noisy, chirping, feathered wildlife.

Don pondered the situation awhile. He bet me a leftover cookie he could shoot through the center and kill at least ten birds. If I shot at the same time we might get enough birds to pick and roast.

We took aim. Don counted to three and shots were fired. A black cloud took off. What a noise! The birds flew almost from sight and landed in top of a pine tree.

The carefully aimed shots were not successful. There was one bird killed out of all the hundreds that survived. That, indeed, was a mystery.

We dug a hole about a foot deep beneath the spreading oak, wrapped the bird in a paper bag, and covered it with soil. That was the least we could do. The two of us stood up, glanced at each other, and walked away.

Awhile later we were near a main road, headed for home. A member of the school board drove by, driving slow. Thank goodness he had his eyes on an old cow that crossed in front of him. He didn't know anyone was near.

By now we were about five miles from home. In order to bypass a farm it would put us a mile south of Antioch School. To circle around east of school, no one was likely to

see us. But there weren't too many places to explore, and there was a wide rocky flat to cross over.

In deep thought Don said, "Let's live dangerous and walk along the road right past Antioch School. Everyone will be busy and won't notice us go by." I was reluctant, but Don headed up the road, and I followed.

As we strolled past the schoolyard gate, I glanced toward the school. There, standing by a window was a sight I'll never forget. If there was a hole close by, I would have tried my best to crawl into it. With hands on her hips, our teacher was watching. No doubt she was forming a plan about how to punish us. Several kids were watching too. One big guy shook his fist at us. We kept trudging along, but from that moment I had an uneasy feeling about returning to school the next day.

Don and I arrived back to the place where we bumped into each other that morning. Without a word, he started around the hill toward his home. I headed out across a strip of open country toward mine.

Some things were going through my mind about playing hooky. Our teacher might dish out a spanking, or give us a scolding in front of all the other kids. I walked in the door at the same time as if it was another bad day at school. The folks didn't find out about our day off until quite awhile later. Seemed like maybe it would all go away if ignored.

The next day, Don and I walked toward school together. He was a deep thinker. Finally he said, "Well, Slim, I guess we just as well go face the music." At school we walked through the door about a minute apart. The teacher greeted us with a hearty, "Good morning!", like nothing had happened. She never let on that anything was amiss. In fact all the rest of the week, nothing was said. Maybe she sure enough forgot. But, boy what torture, not knowing when the jig was up. Is she waiting for a special time? What a mess.

Believe me, Don and I were model students for the rest of the school year. As I look back, the young teacher knew how to handle big teenagers like Don and I. She kept us guessing every day. Every time she looked our way, no doubt she was amused, knowing how we felt. In fact, nothing was ever mentioned to our folks about the day Don and I played hooky. She was a teacher who knew how to handle tough situations.

CHAPTER SEVEN
TIMBER WOLF PASS

After school was out it most surely was a different way of life. Now I could go to bed at night and not have to worry about subjects of some kind that drove me nuts. I hated school with a passion.

But during the hot summer months there were always many exciting things to do and places to explore. Of course it wasn't all play and no work. The depression years were tough. My folks had to work mighty hard for what little money they took in. Even though they ran a mail route three days a week, Dad and Mom had to work at other things as well.

Cutting wood was a sure way to earn ready cash. A tier of wood is eight feet long and four feet high. Each stick is generally sixteen inches long. It sold for one dollar. A cord of wood was three tier. It sold for three dollars, delivered. Chicken eggs were five cents a dozen. Wages were twenty five cents an hour for hard labor. It was tough sledding, but things progressed winter and summer. Fighting the cold and heat was a way of life we were used to.

It was an early spring that year. Everything greened up fast, and wild flowers were blooming everywhere you looked. All the animals shed off and looked brand new. It appeared we should get braced for a long hot summer. The nights were always so hot and miserable it was nearly impossible to get any rest. Open doors and windows was very poor air conditioning. Night bugs and mosquitoes could come and go as they pleased.

One night as I was laying on top of the covers trying to sleep, the thought occurred to me, why not sleep outside under an oak tree? At least the biting insects would be scattered around more instead of being concentrated around me in a small room. And the night air would keep me cooler. If things were planned out right, Mom might at least let me give it a try.

Next morning as we sat around the breakfast table I mentioned how nice it would be to sleep outside. By the look on Mom's face she knew what my next comment would be, "Can I put my bed outside?"

At first, she seemed reluctant, but as we talked it over there was no good reason why it shouldn't work. I knew where there was an old discarded bedsprings. They were held together by an iron pipe along each side and one inch angle iron across the ends. The chain link type springs had a hole in the center, but a little haywire would make the bed good as new.

I dragged the springs home. There were two white oak trees that grew about ten feet apart near the south end of the house. If it was rigged like a hammock it might dump me on the ground. But there were limbs to tie to, and it should be fairly stable.

Dad gave me some rope, and along with several strands of haywire my new bedstead swung about four feet above the ground. Mom helped me lug a mattress out and lay it in place. I made my bed up and added a pillow. Now to try it out. An adjustment on the ropes at a place or two, and it was ready, and I could hardly wait for the night to come.

My cousin Don came down to visit the next morning. He wanted to discuss another hunting trip. My new bed looked so inviting he yanked off his boots, hung his big hat on a tree limb, and tried it out. And it looked like forever more, he went sound to sleep. But with some good-natured joking about cutting ropes to dump him on the ground, I finally coaxed him into his boots and hat.

We sat in the shade and discussed our next night adventure. My mother came from the house to join in. She brought along two water glasses and a pitcher of pink lemonade. That would certainly stimulate our thoughts when it came to making foolproof plans.

When Don wanted to make a point about something, he would smooth off a place on the ground. He drew a very graphic picture in the dirt with a stick that included directions such as north, south, east, west. Another unique habit, when he drew an outline, Don nearly always faced north. Those involved would have no question about directions or important places, and would be oriented with the country. He made emphasis at certain places of particular interest by tapping the stick at that spot. (Since those days I have used that method of instruction many times).

Five or six miles west, across country, there were two springs. One was in an open field near an abandoned house. It was the old Nerrigan homestead. At one time Don had lived there with his folks.

The other spring was at the upper end of an open field. They were less than a mile apart. As we talked about it, the one farthest uphill would be our choice. It wasn't near the road and spotlights would be harder to see.

Our plan was to head out about mid-afternoon. We would walk all the way. No one would give it a second thought seeing two men walking cross country. Our flashlights were well-concealed.

The 22 caliber rifles were well oiled and clean. The ammunition on hand was 22 shorts, the smallest shell made. There wouldn't be much noise when it exploded. A well-placed shot would bring down any sized deer.

I sat on the edge of my bed and waited. Don went down past our well, up through the fence gate and on toward home. In a few hours, he would be back, loaded for bear, and would expect to see me likewise.

Mom, Dad, and my sister, Loretta, listened closely as I told about our plan. It was some difficult trying to point and draw a picture as I created a couple peanut butter and jam sandwiches. But my enthusiasm wore off on them as Mom poured me a glass of milk.

After dinner I rested up. Tonight was going to be a jim-dandy when it came to excitement. Dad came into the living room and sat down. He told me about a time or two he had ventured out on a hunt like Don and I were planning to do. His advice was to watch out for rattlesnakes.

At four o'clock Don arrived, ready to head out. When we went on a night hunt, we always tried to be as obscure as we could. It made us feel more secure by taking advantage of fences, creek beds and ditches. Today we followed our south fence to within a quarter mile of Snyder Creek.

Its banks were twelve or fourteen feet down to bedrock. The water had washed away part of a farmer's field and exposed alfalfa roots that penetrated the soil for five or six feet and more.

We went south, downstream for a hundred yards and came to a deep ditch that went west. It followed a fence line almost to Meadows Road. (We used to sneak up the ditch at night in the fall of the year and swipe a watermelon or two.)

We watched for cars, up and down the dusty, graveled road, then crossed over into dense chaparral brush. From here, almost to the spring we would be out of sight. There was a shallow dry wash a ways from an open field we had to cross to reach our hideout. The sand bars were wide and long. Animal tracks showed up quite plain. Don decided to

roll one last Bull Durham cigarette and rest while he puffed away. I never did smoke much.

We arrived at the spring right after sundown. There was a big tall laurel tree (madrone) close by. A limb grew out about six feet and curved upward. It made a perfect perch for spotlighters. Numerous animal tracks showed up all around the area. The deep, clear water spring was a source of water that never went dry. The same volume flowed from it winter and summer.

I held our guns while Don shinnied up the slick-barked tree. I passed the guns up to him. It was quite a struggle to climb to where he was.

The tree limb was at least twelve feet above ground. We were high enough so most deer and other animals would never notice our presence. Downhill from the spring, a homesteader had cleared out brush to the edge of the field. The clearing was at least eighty feet wide. Tall, dense chaparral skirted each side. We had full view of open country and the old Sam's Valley Road.

From here on the waiting game started. Mosquitoes had no trouble finding us. Night birds began to fly around and make a lot of noise. A single bat would flutter by, looking for something to eat.

In those days there was a bird about the size of a pigeon. It flew high. When it saw an insect fluttering around near ground the bird would actually power dive, making a roaring sound as air passed by its feathers. It was called a bull-bat.

Another night bird that doesn't exist anymore is the small screech owl. It was about the size of a quail, only its feathers were fluffed out. Bright eyes peered from their round little heads and never missed a movement. When these little guys set up a chatter, generally some animal was intruding in their territory. They were always good indicators that a deer could be coming down to the water.

What really sounded good to me was the Great Horned owl. He may grow to the size of, or bigger than, a barnyard Rhode Island Red rooster. The fluffed up feathers cause him to look much larger, sort of like a turkey. They start hooting in early evening and quite a distance apart. One will call. In a few seconds another will answer. Their voices are different. I have heard these owls follow me for miles as I rode a saddle horse across the forest trails in the middle of the night. That was in later years.

What Don and I were doing might not have been legal, but boy was it fun. There was such great anticipation. Something could spook the daylights out of us at any moment. Seemed like my hair was on the verge of standing on end. The flow of adrenaline gave us energy and kept us alert. I do believe we could jump from our perch, hit the ground, run like turkeys and never suffer a bruise or scratch.

Don tapped my elbow. It was a signal for me to flash my light. Something may have walked in. The bright beam of light was spooky when it cut into such darkness.

A jack rabbit scampered away a few yards and stopped. His bright eyes glistened like a couple hot coals of fire. I turned the light off after about half a minute. Don never turned his head, but sat rigid. He moved his eyes back and forth that took in every movement. He sniffed the air to sort out anything that might be a clue of something milling around. Certain animals give off an odor at times. Cougar or an older deer or bear may have a certain faint smell that drifts in the still night air. Only a true hillbilly would ever think of these things.

We waited twenty minutes and Don tried his light to see if it worked. He sighted his gun barrel down its bright beam. There were three sets of eyes looking up toward us. The one farthest away was the biggest.

Things began to happen quickly, and I was absolutely petrified. Don squeezed the trigger on his gun. Fire belched from the end of the barrel, and the deer fell over. The other two bounded away making a lot of noise for a short distance.

Don was on the ground and halfway to the deer before I finally came unglued and nearly fell from my perch. The solid ground felt good beneath my feet. In a second I was at Don's side. He had stuck the deer and told me to "grab a hind leg and let's get going."

The deer was heavy but we made good time. It was a downhill shove, and we were scared. In short order we were back at the dry wash we had left less than two hours ago. Once we got underway we never stopped, and we didn't look back.

We sat down to rest, completely winded. At least from here on we could go at a slower pace because time didn't mean anything. We kept quiet and never turned on a flashlight or struck a match.

Ten minutes later the deer was dressed out. It was a fat forked horn. The bullet struck the deer in the neck. That was where Don always aimed. They would go down with a broken neck and never get up.

There was a big job ahead now. It would take some real hillbilly strategy to get our kill home without getting caught. From where we were it was a couple hundred yards to a four way junction. There were several tough situations to figure out. We were over four miles from home, traveling across country. There were fences to cross and one creek to wade.

To cope with all the things at hand, the deer would have to be skinned out and cut up for a divided load. It would take all night to get home. Finally Don came up with an idea. First of all we would take the deer to within a hundred yards of the four corners. There he would whisper the rest of the plan to me.

The animal was heavy. Dead weight sure pulls a fellow down, especially while stumbling around in the dark. The dry creek bed was littered with smooth rocks and small pebbles. An occasional boulder stuck up from the litter. There were long flat sand bars around every bend. But it was much easier to move along than trying to fight the brush and downed trees that grew nearby.

We stopped to rest and do some more thinking. As usual, Don started rounding up the makings for another Bull Durham smoke. He reached for a match and suddenly became motionless. Seconds before, I felt very uneasy and alert. It was a strange, fearful dread. He took hold of my arm and leaned close. In a coarse whisper he said, "Something is following us." It was an animal of some kind and not too far away. Before he took hold of my arm, cold chills went up my back and down the outsides of my arms. The adrenaline really flowed. Our bodies were as tight as drum strings. We decided to keep moving.

We left the wash and took turns dragging the meat and walking shotgun so-to-speak, ready to do battle. We stopped within a hundred yards or so from the four corners. I would stay with our venison while he went to look up and down all four roads. Hopefully, no one would come along or be waiting in a parked car.

He walked up within fifty feet of the four corners and listened. He crouched low and kept going. The last few feet he crawled on his belly to where there was a good view of all four roads and stayed put about twenty minutes.

Meanwhile, I sat so quiet my breathing was noisy and made me nervous. It was so blame dark I had a hard time remembering what light was. In a few minutes my body started to relax a little and decided to enjoy our adventure.

Suddenly, directly behind me the most awful high-pitched sound shattered the stillness. I could feel the hair raise up on the back of my neck. My hat seemed loose when my hair stood on end. The gun was my only defense, and I thumbed the hammer back, ready for action.

The blood-chilling wail was a coyote. It howled and yipped once, but that was aplenty. It had been following the smell of fresh meat. For the next few minutes, talk about nervous! I danged near climbed a tree except for one thing. It was too dark to see one. I sat and waited. It wasn't long until I heard a familiar sound. Don used an empty 22 shell to blow in. It made a high-pitched noise that carried a long ways. I answered so he could walk to me.

He sat down close by and never uttered a word. I knew better than to start talking. He quietly rolled a cigarette and leaned toward the ground, between me and the deer to strike a match. After a long drag on the misshapen piece of brown paper and tobacco, he leaned close and said, "Did you hear a coyote?"

I whispered my story. He said it sounded so close to him he could almost smell its breath. Said his hair stood on end. Cold chills travelled around on his body as he cocked the gun, ready to start shooting. We knew the coyote wasn't the animal that gave us the eerie feeling earlier.

Our plan was starting to come to a head. We were sure no one heard the gunshot. There were no men wandering around. The game warden was working in another part of the country. At least we could talk above a whisper.

Don would sweat it out and stay with the deer. Without my gun I would head out across country toward home and drive our 1930 Chevy sedan back to get Don and the deer. I was to pull up a ways from the intersection and cause the car to sputter and stop by pulling out the choke, then climb out, lift the hood and try to correct the motor failure. When repairs were made I would slam the hood down. That would be a clue for Don to stuff the deer through a rear door onto the floor boards, and we would move out slow, like the car motor was still acting up.

I got my orders straight, headed out, and hoped the coyote didn't steal our meat. I still think Don climbed an oak tree to wait my return. I would have.

I took my flashlight along. If a rattlesnake started buzzing, it would be nice to turn it on to keep track of him. It was touch, feel, and go all the way. Knowing the country helped a lot. I climbed a fence between Luke Jennings and Schultz's. A half mile from Snyder Creek there was an open field to cross. It seemed a little lighter. Suddenly, there was a lot of movement and what had happened before caused me to do things automatically. My flashlight shined the eyes of some big animals. My route had taken me through a feed lot. There were over thirty head of white face cows looking me over. Thank goodness they were barnyard stock, and were used to dogs and people.

After that little set to, I got my bearing and took off. Snyder Creek should be just ahead. Now to figure out where the crossing was.

I walked northeast across the field. There was a ditch I mentioned before. It went due east following a fence line to the creek. Sure enough, it was within a few feet of my calculations. The bank gave way. I picked myself up and walked toward the creek.

In less than half an hour I could see the house. The light shining from the kitchen window looked so inviting. I opened the door and dashed in. Mom screamed, and Dad nearly swallowed his chewing tobacco. But with the look on my face they knew we must of had good luck. I rested and sipped at a hot cup of coffee while my story unfolded. My sister, Loretta, was all ears. It sounded exciting.

Dad handed me the car keys. Mom said everything would be ready to skin out the deer. The 1930 model Chevy ran good and rattled along at forty miles an hour on straight-a ways. A short distance from the four corners I tugged on the choke, the motor began to sputter and smoke, died and coasted to a stop. For effect, I climbed out and left the door open, walked around to the other side, and lifted the hood. My flashlight would hold the attention of anyone who might pass by.

Don was close by. He opened the back door and with great effort, managed to shove the deer through. He climbed in the front seat and said, "Come on, Slim, let's get going."

The starter worked good but the motor wouldn't fire. Don calmly reached over and pushed the choke in. The car took off in a cloud of smoke, and we headed for home.

As we rolled along down the road, Don told me what happened while he waited. About five minutes after I had left there were two vehicles came to the four corners from different directions. A man got out of each rig, stood at the edge of the road and started talking. Don could hear most of the conversation, but couldn't tell who they were.

One fellow said he had seen a light and heard one shot on a hillside about a mile away. After some small talk, they got back in their rigs and headed west toward Nerrigan Springs.

Don had been lying flat, behind a short bush, close to the Sam's Valley road. A car drove by and close behind was a dark-colored pickup. A metal box was mounted behind the cab and a long antenna mounted on the side swung back and forth when it rolled by. It must have been the game warden.

A half hour later the car drove by and went toward Antioch. The pickup went south on the Sam's Valley road, hoping to catch up with the nighttime hunters.

A few minutes before I returned with the car, Don walked around a little. He sniffed the air. If anyone stuck around after those rigs left he could smell something. Being cautious he started back toward the deer. There was something going on. He nearly fell over a moving object and jumped sideways and fell over a bush. Near the deer, there was a mad scramble and scuffling. An animal whined. Don's hair started to stand on end. He flashed his light in the direction of the fracas. The shining eyes of five coyotes were looking toward him. Their lips were turned wrong side out exposing vicious teeth and fangs. Cold chills enveloped his body, but he maintained control and wouldn't start shooting unless they attacked. Apparently the beam of his light frightened the animals. They all turned and melted away into the night.

Don's story about the coyotes caused me to have a reaction as he talked. Cold chills ran over my body again, in fact, I almost turned on the car heater.

We drove through the pasture gate down toward the house. Dad, Mom, and sisters, Loretta and Sally, met us. I drove on out to the chicken house as they followed. Dad had rigged up the gambrel. We pulled the deer up with rope blocks, head down, to skin it out. Mom was standing by with a saw to cut the carcass in half.

It was hard to believe, but all the things that happened, and trouble we had, the heart and liver were saved. It was cut in half, too. I helped Don carry his part home that night. We didn't drive the car because it might draw attention.

Don came down to visit around ten o'clock the next day. We talked about the hair-raising fun we had the night before. There was more excitement during those hours from sundown to midnight, there was just no room for anything else. We had us some good clean fun, and we won out by using good old hillbilly strategy and common sense.

But, there was something else that bothered us both. What followed us along while we dragged the dead deer down the wash? Whatever it was spooked each of us at the same time. Maybe we could borrow the car and idle over that way and look for tracks.

My Dad agreed. We headed back to the wash by way of Dodge road. I parked the car at a wide place. If someone drove by they would think we were looking for a bee tree. We took a look at the four way junction. Sure enough, two rigs had been parked there and were waiting. Several cigarette butts had been ground into the dirt. A couple fresh bread wrappers were crumpled and tossed in the ditch. Man tracks showed along the dusty roadside.

We retraced our steps back toward the dry wash. We passed over the place where Don had seen the five coyotes after our deer. Dead grass and dry leaves were all torn up where they scuffled. As we walked along up the gulch, over the sand bars, we made a startling discovery. There were two sets of very distinct tracks. The paws that made them were four inches across. The animals were big because the tracks were far apart and sank into the fine sand.

We scouted around some more, then headed back home with another true story. Don's father had been a trapper during his life. We told him all about the tracks and the feeling we had when the animals had followed us. When he told us what they were, cold chills ran up our backs again just thinking about it. The animals were Timber Wolves. Man, what a feeling!

This true story is one of the many adventures Don and I experienced during the depression years. Beagle was our home, where we grew up into manhood. I'm sure if the war hadn't split that country up, we would have put Beagle on the map, just the two of us.

CHAPTER EIGHT
GAME WARDENS AND POACHERS

Don was a year older than I was. He had an older brother who told him a lot of things. His Dad was also one of the Sons of the Pioneers and had learned many difficult tasks the hard way. People survived many hardships by ingenuity and common sense.

My cousin was pretty crafty in knowing how to keep track of Game Wardens, and knew those neighbors who would turn us in if ever they found out anything. He coached me on every detail and named the men who were stool pigeons.

The law enforcement people were fine honest dedicated men. We knew them well and drank their coffee as we listened to some of their experiences.

Poachers were men who killed deer, bear, and other wild game. They sold the meat, hide, feathers, and feet. Those were the ones Game Wardens were after. Of course, if we were caught, the same penalty would apply. The poachers or game hogs made it all the rougher to keep food on the table. Don never thought of us as poachers. We were night hunters or spot lighters. He and his family would do anything they could to bring about the arrest and conviction of those unscrupulous law breakers.

But in our case, we didn't feel guilty because wild game was one source to help keep food on the table. Our families needed the meat to survive, especially during the long winter months.

The words, "unemployment compensation", were never heard of in those days. It was do or die of starvation. Welfare, Red Cross, and the Salvation Army were around, but those agencies were designed to help people who were either too elderly, sick or crippled. It would have been absolutely unheard of for one of us to put the touch on them for a free handout.

We were strong able-bodied men who could fend for ourselves. We felt that our illegal hunting was justified, and we had absolutely no use for those who would take advantage of such an offer if they were well and healthy. There were a good many lazy, pot-bellied, no-account people who found it quite handy to fake some sort of handicap and apply for, and get a welfare check every month. We called them moochers, freeloaders.

There was one couple we kept our eye on and were careful what was said in their presence. The two were a brother and sister who owned the Beagle Post Office in the early 30's, and pumped gas to supplement their income. They knew everyone in the country and kept track of things by reading penny post cards before they were sent out.

They owned a 1916 Model T Ford, cloth-topped three door sedan. About the only time he drove it was to Medford, and they attended church at Agate School every Sunday, rain or shine.

On nice days she got her exercise by walking. She would come by at the most inconvenient times and visit, spread gossip, and look around for an hour or more. Once in awhile if Mom would let me, I would offer to give the old gal a ride back home just to get her off the property. Neighbors always thought she did this to maybe see or smell something that might be an indicator of a law breaker. We were very careful about giving our dog a bone from deer we killed. And we didn't make any home brew or keep a moonshine still in the smokehouse.

She would very nearly always visit Don's home the next day after she came to my house. They lived up on a hill and could see her coming five minutes before she arrived.

If Don was home, he was the one who welcomed the lively old lady. During the warm weather months there were always seats nearby in the shade of the house, or under an oak tree. Don would let her rest in the best chair while he went to fetch a glass of water. He would sit down, facing her and appear to be relaxed. He would let her do the talking and listen to what she said and how she said it. Also, her eyes were a dead give-away if she started asking too many questions.

There was a method to his madness. When a word could be crammed in edgeways, he casually mentioned something about seeing a State Police rig drive by a few days back. That gave her a clue to talk about a pet subject. She knew exactly why the patrolman came by and knew the details.

Her and her brother had heard about two gunshots awhile back. There were no telephones to report it. The only way to alert the police was by a penny post card or make a special trip to Medford. He had stopped by the post office to get more detail.

She didn't know it but her story was exactly what Don wanted to hear. The Game Warden would be patrolling the upper Sam's Valley country, and would be looking for known law breakers and poachers. Someone had told the Postmaster about a gunshot at Nerrigan Springs. Sometime in the afternoon and late evening he would set up surveillance tactics and maybe make an arrest.

After another half hour of interesting conversation the woman asked for another glass of water. She even shook hands with Don and told him how nice a visit she had. He stood there scratching his head as she departed down the long lane toward the road with a smile on her face.

I felt sort of sorry for the elderly lady. She was a kind, tender-hearted person who meant no harm. In looking back she more or less kept families pulled a little closer together. We called her a gossip, but actually she told us true stories about sickness, new babies, and who got false teeth. Such information would never have been known if it wasn't for her. Because during the depression years no one could afford a newspaper.

There were two large families who ate three meals a day besides snacks in between. Meat was a favorite! It was included for dinner and supper. Sometimes it was part of our breakfast.

It was time for Don and I to go try our luck. We knew of a good place east of home and five miles south of Shady Cove. As we planned out our new adventure we took a drive through upper Sam's Valley country and went by where we could look up toward Nerrigan Springs. We went up a dirt road that made a loop around the hillside and decided to stop and target practice and drink some coffee. Soon we pulled out and headed for the Sam's Valley Store to buy some candy and soda pop.

Don shifted into high gear, then suddenly pulled over and stopped. I looked back. A red light flashed a warning to stop. The Game Warden walked up and wanted to see Don's driver's license. After that, he checked out safety items on the car such as emergency brake, horn, lights, etc. He wanted to take a look inside the trunk. There was nothing there except a spare tire and a punctured sack of chicken feed.

The officer kept eyeing our guns and asked permission to pick one up. He was pleased to notice there was no live ammunition in either gun. Soon, he introduced himself. Said he was new to the area and was out getting acquainted with local people. He casually asked what we did for a living and what part of the country we lived in. Don really put on a front. He fed the poor man a line of stories that would cause the most calloused officer to believe we were the most law-abiding citizens he ever met. He casually brought up the

subject about poaching. The Game Warden wouldn't talk about it too much but unknowingly gave away enough information to help a lot. By now we knew that Devenger Gap would be a good bet.

Don had purchased a 1929 Pontiac. It ran like a top and got good mileage. We headed for home to make plans for another night hunt. Mom and Dad were glad we were going to try for another deer because we had just run out of meat. I fixed up a thermos filled with hot coffee and made some sandwiches. There was no use getting hungry if we were out all night. Don said he would be by in an hour. He should be on the way.

When he arrived we had coffee and discussed plans. We told our folks where we planned on parking his car if they should have to look for us. We headed out for a night in the woods. I had an idea to drive north up the River Road clear up to Shady Cove, then double back and go west at Devenger Gap. By doing so we were able to look for suspicious vehicles and strangers.

We traveled up the Devenger Gap Road about a mile. There was a deserted two-story house and other out buildings nearby. It was a good place to park the car so it would be out of sight. It was less than one mile to the spring we planned to visit.

Darkness was closing in. We stayed in the car with windows down, listening. It's so strange the different sound and noises a person can hear. You wonder if something was making them or if they just happen. Gets spooky sometimes. Silence was broken when Don tore the wrapper off a sandwich and was fumbling around trying to find the jug of coffee. We ate our lunches and drank hot coffee to rinse it down.

This time of day was always special. It was dark. There was no moon, and the stars weren't out yet. A Great Horned owl was perched high in a pine tree, hooting for his mate. The large birds we called bull bats swooped down to capture an insect in flight. Crickets chirped everywhere. Dozens of frogs were living it up a ways off. There must be a pond of water out there on the flat. A noisy mosquito was buzzing around inside the car for a moment. I knew where it landed because Don slapped the side of his neck rather quickly. We rolled up the windows to prevent more intrusions.

It wasn't much use heading up toward the spring yet. During this kind of weather, deer didn't start moving until later in the evening. Maybe we could catch a few winks in the meantime. But, in a short time some more mosquitoes showed up. I'll bet there were more of the biting insects inside the car than outside. How they ever got in was a mystery. We finally gave up trying to sleep and prepared to head out.

Don always took the lead. He knew the best way to take and how to get to where we wanted to go. We were travelling through rattlesnake country. The greenish black-colored Timber Rattler was a mean one, but always shook his rattles when something approached. Don taught me how to become tuned into such a sound.

There was a trail that went past a broken down chicken house and out beyond the barnyard. It was open going as we crossed a forty acre field and climbed over a rail fence. From here, chaparral, oak, and laurel trees were thick, clear to the spring. It took a half hour to get this far. The spring was about a hundred feet away. It paid to be cautious. I stayed put in one spot while Don circled around above the spring. We kept quiet and listened for quite awhile.

I heard a shrill sound. Don blew air into an empty 22 shell. That was the way we signaled each other when it was dark. I answered, and we proceeded on to the spring. There was a big laurel tree near this spring like at Nerrigan, but the trunk was a lot bigger.

It slanted over for eight or ten feet, and branched out into a bushy crown. The heavy foliage made a good blind for spot lighters.

Don climbed up to the first limb and reached for the guns. The tree trunk was big, and the bark was slick. But after a couple tries I was sitting beside Don and levered a shell into the gun barrel.

It must have been around eleven p.m. A half moon broke over the horizon and caused eerie shadows to show up. Once we got settled we would sit virtually motionless. It's interesting how comfortable a man can get and five minutes later become so absolutely miserable.

Out on the hillside an occasional twig would snap and little disturbances were evident. The adrenaline started flowing. How exciting it was! Don turned on his light and flashed the beam around slowly. There wasn't an animal of any kind in sight. You would think it would spook a deer clear out of the country, but that isn't true. If one is nearby it will come right on in after the light is turned off.

The noises of the night were continuous. But there was one disturbance that persisted. It sounded like the movement of a large animal. Deer don't make any noise when they approach a spring or salt lick unless two bucks start sparring at each other. A bear would cause some noise because they would dig at a rotten log or stump looking for grubs and ants.

Sure enough, directly beneath us was the culprit who kept us spooked. Close behind was another black, moving object. I danged near pulled the trigger first and turned on my light last.

But Don, as usual, was calm as a cucumber. He touched my shoulder and pointed downhill. Something else was moving toward us as it crossed an opening. Don turned on his spotlight and pointed that direction. A big white face cow took shape. Her calf was close by. To the right there was a huge herd bull with long curved horns. The noise we heard beneath us was another cow and calf. With both lights on we counted seventeen head of cattle coming to get a drink; there were shining eyes all over the place.

Some of the younger cows bunched up when they saw us, but didn't run away. The cow and calf close by never moved when we climbed down from the tree.

The spring would soon be occupied by a bunch of thirsty cows. Deer weren't likely to come in until they began to thin out. We stood by the tree a moment to make plans for departure. To retrace our steps would be a mistake. But there was a deer trail out of our way some and it would cross the other trail once. We could follow it easily without a light. Crossing the upper end of the forty acre field would be easy. Being cautious, we could spot a parked vehicle. If one showed up, we would wait until it left no matter how long it took.

Don took the lead. I stayed back a ways and followed. If he should rile up a rattlesnake the fun would be on again. It wasn't safe to be too close when he started backing up.

We stopped at the edge of the open field to look things over. The moon was bright enough so we were able to make out certain objects. Everything looked ok. The field was covered with dry fox tail and tar weed. Sticky cracks must have been two inches wide in places but we stumbled along. Suddenly the strong beam from a search light turned on. It started at the east end of the field, and slowly came our way. Don hit the ground first and yanked me down with him. My gun barrel rammed into the dry dirt, and the lens on my light shattered. But we were shielded by the foul smelling tall tar weed.

The spotlight played over us and would focus on different spots along the way. From the intruder to the vacant buildings was more than a quarter of mile. The search light seemed to bounce from the unpainted outside walls. We laid flat to the ground as the bright light came back over us. When it passed, Don whispered instructions. After the light passed over us again we must jump up and run toward cover as fast as we could. When it started back we would lay low.

Our timing was good. The light went by, Don got up and said, "Run for it." When he hit the dirt, so did I. We fell to the ground, dodging the light four times before we made it to the protection of dense brush and oak trees. The searcher was persistent. The powerful light kept going back and forth for quite awhile. Seemed like he was wasting his time because who would ever appear in an open field unless something was after him.

Must have been around two a.m. the next day by now. The spotlight went out and a set of head and tail lights came on. The vehicle moved along slow and disappeared as it went through the gap, down around a turn, heading toward Beagle.

Don and I were maybe a quarter mile from our car. We lit out running toward it as fast as the rough ground would let us and approached it cautiously. He had the motor running by the time my door slammed shut.

We drove along the main road without headlights and more or less followed the strange car. Don drove down a hill out of sight when he turned on the headlights and set them on high beams.

Suddenly he spotted something and slammed on the brakes. I banged both knees against the dash. He laughed and grabbed both guns and lights. I watched as he crammed them into a ten inch culvert. We went along for the next two miles or so. A set of tail lights showed up just ahead of us. The rig was stopped at the edge of the road. We drove up and started to pass. A uniformed State Patrolman flagged us down. The Pontiac rolled to a stop behind the official pickup. We walked around and stood in the beam of our headlights. Sure enough, it was the young officer we had met a few hours back.

It was three o'clock in the morning by now, and it did look suspicious to the law man. Why were we driving around and here at that time of day?

He asked permission to search the car. Numerous questions were asked and answers were good. Finally Don's patience got the best of him. He flared up and ask if there was any law that said we couldn't travel around at night.

After that he calmed down and acted less officious. We visited for awhile. Again he seemed convinced we were good, law-abiding citizens, said farewell, and drove off down the road.

This time I was glad we didn't have a deer tucked in the car trunk. And Don was wise to hide our equipment. It was certainly a relief to see those tail lights disappear down the road.

Game Wardens were hard to fool but we out-guessed them more than once, mostly because we knew the country better. Next time our area would be so remote no one would ever guess our presence.

We drove along toward home empty-handed, but that didn't dampen our spirits. We would retrieve our guns and flash lights the next day, then make plans for another night time hunt.

CHAPTER NINE
FISHING WITH A RIFLE

In this day and age people see shows on television about hillbillies. The modern version about what a backwoods man or woman was like is so stupid and dumb. To most of the younger generations we are, and were, illiterate, slow to figure things out, and they think of us as animal-like folks, sort of like cavemen or something.

One time a smart alec guy got to me, making fun of hillbilly life. He asked me what it was really like since he knew I was one of seven generations who lived in the Rogue River Valley. The older people, including myself, were born and raised in the hills.

To shut him up, I said, "Sure, sit down and listen; I was born in a house beside a mountain stream. By the time I was two years old I carried a gun and knew how to use it. Only problem was it was too heavy for me to pack too far, so Dad made a two-wheeled cart to haul it in. My big dog pulled it around for me. I could blow the head off a grouse at 100 yards. Anything I shot at never had a chance. I learned my ABCs before I turned 9 years old and could count to ten just before that, and I could spot a Game Warden a mile away and a city dweller was easy to spot, you could smell them."

Before the dummy got his education he got up and walked away, shaking his head. But before he got too far away I pointed out that a city gink like him didn't need common sense to survive, cause someone else did their thinking for him. He kept on going.

I suppose there is a heap of difference between the eastern and southern type hillbillies and those who lived in the Pacific Northwest like we did. Us fellers never ran around in deer skin clothes with an odd-ball looking coonskin hat. We never carried big knives in a scabbard that dangled strings clear to the ground either. Nor did we carry rifles done up in a floppy, deer skin scabbard to keep the dust and rain off. But we did carry pistols and hunting knives on our belts. Don and I carried sharp pocket knives all the time. And our rifles were always in hand, ready to lever in a shell when needed. We did not carry a gun with live ammunition in the barrel.

Don and I used to set around a cooking fire and talk about such things. It would really be fun to lure one of those city dudes out to our country and get him lost. He and I had so much fun together, mostly during the times we were fishing or hunting. I remember one time we were on the Rogue River at a place a mile or so downriver from Dodge Bridge. His fishing pole was a long, tough cane stalk he had purchased at Lamport's Sporting Goods company. It was mighty tough. It was rigged to catch salmon with. I carried a bamboo trout pole.

There was a mile or two of riverbank that was made up of small boulders and sandy stretches. Along the upper end of the open beach, Don hooked on to a big salmon. Of course it took off, downriver at first, then back it came. Don kept working and playing line out all he dared to. What Don was doing was to tire the fish out, then start working it toward shore. He fought and played the big fish for over an hour. I just hung along to watch. Finally, persistence paid off. Slowly it was reeled toward shore.

Nearby was a shallow pool, maybe 3 feet deep and 30 feet across. River water splashed up into the pool through a five foot channel. Don was going to try and maneuver the big fish into the pool. Carefully he worked and reeled it toward the small channel. The fish was pretty well done in. At the right moment, Don heaved back on the fishing pole, and

the huge fish ended up right where he wanted it to go. But what a shock it was to catch sight of the hook as it pulled from the jaws of the salmon.

Don threw the pole and dove into the pool and grabbed for its gills with both hands. He went clear under. The water churned and boiled. A big black hat floated to the surface. Then Don came up with a grip on one of the biggest salmon I've ever seen in my life. As soon as it was back about 10 feet from the pool I handed Don a 5 pound river boulder. He hit the big fish on the back of its head and killed it. Don was pooped out.

From where we were it was about a mile downriver where someone was going to pick us up. I cut a green one-inch limb about 3 feet long. We ran it through the fish's gills. We walked along side by side with the ends of the stick in the bend of our elbows. We were both six feet tall. As we walked along, nearly two foot of the fish's tail dragged on the ground. I don't know how much it weighed, but it was a dandy!

One time I saw my uncle, Don's Dad, put 3 big salmon in an 80 pound gunny sack. Their tails stuck up a foot to twenty inches from the top. In those days the salmon were big and there were plenty of them.

There was another time we decided to go fishing with our rifles. During the winter when the water was high and every little stream in the country was at flood stage, salmon would start coming up every one they could get into. There was one fair-sized stream that ran from north to south that went beyond what is now Dodge Road. There were several deep pools located at nearly every bend in the creek.

Don knew where there were two such places out in the middle of a farmer's pasture land. He had flushed a fish or two out, just checking around.

He came by and got me to help bag one of the big fish and told me to bring along my 25-35 Winchester. Funny way to go fishing. We walked in about half a mile. There was a long pole laying near a deep, wide pool. Above it just a few feet was pool number two. A narrow shallow channel connected the two.

Don told me to stand at that spot, thumb the hammer back on my gun and get ready. A salmon would likely run from one pool to the other as he poked the long pole around in the murky water. I stood at the right spot, my gun all cocked and primed.

Soon a strange thing occurred. Here came a huge fish at least four feet long. Its body was wide and deep, and it had a big mouth. It started through the shallow channel and fell back into the deep pool. Pretty soon, here it came again. It was so big that half its body was out of the water as it went by, mostly on its side. There I stood, gun pointed right at its head, and I never pulled the trigger. Right about then, Don saw what didn't happen.

I was so shocked to see such a big fish where it shouldn't have been. I never even remembered to tug on the trigger and kill the fish. Boy did I get a scolding. Don was really disappointed in me. Made me feel real bad. But, being the best of friends, it soon wore off, and he never mentioned it again.

Night hunting was a recreational sport we loved the most. In a few days we would have to pick a place and try our luck. But first it was a must to locate the country where our local Game Warden might be waiting.

The local Beagle Post Office was usually a good source to collect information. Those two people not only loved to talk, but seemed to glory in getting someone in trouble. And one of their pet peeves was poachers.

Don and I learned the names of every bad guy in the country, and some of the people were our friends. By tactfully maneuvering the conversation we could find out where the

State Police would most likely be. To make sure, Don and I would look for ourselves, and sure enough, the Postmaster would be right.

For a day or so we kept our ears to the ground. The State Game Warden was no doubt a busy man. Up around Butte Falls were a bunch of law-breaking, hill folks. In fact, a couple of arrests were made. They just didn't use good sense and got in too big a hurry. Seems like law enforcement people were after some more outlaw hunters up there and planned to keep hanging around.

Finally we had a plan. We would tackle Nerrigan Spring on a weekend night. If the cops were busy during the week, working long, hard hours, surely they wouldn't bother with a little place like that on a Saturday or Sunday night. On Friday afternoon we made plans to head over that way the next day.

Don and I took off in his car at 3 p.m. We would drive around some and maybe park on a back road in Nerrigan country and watch, listen, and sniff the air. Sniffing the air was important. The odor from tobacco was easy to smell. An experienced hillbilly was able to detect it for a long ways.

Another trick of ours was to watch the movements of animals and birds. We also worked on hunches and certain feelings. Considering all the factors was one reason we never got caught, even though we did have a close call or two.

Just before dark we maneuvered around and approached Nerrigan Spring from the northwest side. All roads and the big open field were in full view. If a Game Warden planned to stake out a likely place, nearly always they would be all set up by now, especially in rattlesnake country. We approached Nerrigan after dark. As usual, Don climbed up the slick trunk of a big laurel tree. It was slanted toward the downhill side, otherwise I'm sure some steps would have been nailed on to get up to the perch.

At first it felt kinda good to be here. Don and I had spent a lot of mean, hard, bone-numbing hours on this old tree limb, waiting for something to move.

One of the things I dearly loved was to listen as the forest around us came to life. Night animals and birds would come out to grab a bite to eat and, I'm sure, do a lot of playing around. The Great Horned owl was my favorite. Seemed to always just be two at a time. One would hoot a couple times, another one a quarter or half mile away, across a field or canyon, would answer. I got so engrossed in night time activity, the one thing that brought me back to business at hand was when Don nudged me. Usually something was about to happen.

Don played the beam of his light back and forth across the opening and toward the big field east of our hiding place. About 30 seconds was long enough. We waited maybe 20 minutes and tried again. The bright light beam never disturbed a deer. If one or even half a dozen were just out of sight, all they would do is look toward it, then keep on browsing. That was one reason we flashed for just a few seconds at a time.

A half hour passed by. Nothing had meandered in. Suddenly we got a shock of our lives. A couple hundred feet below us, a bright beam of light came from the edge of the brush right toward the tree we were in. Now what? It could be another night hunter or maybe a cop. Seemed like identical thoughts were going through our minds.

A hunter would flash his light for a short time and wait like we did. A Game Warden would not likely be so close to the spring, and also, he wouldn't turn his light off once he started looking.

Finally Don leaned over and whispered instructions. He would start hacking and coughing and saying a few words. Then I would take my turn and do the same. That way,

whoever they were would know two men were up the tree. A minute or so passed. We headed for the ground. Once there I blame near fell in the spring. Don was rushing me too much.

Cautiously we headed down past the two spot lighters. When we passed by, they were maybe ten feet away. Don said, "It's all yours boys," and we took off running in different directions. It was over a quarter of a mile across an open field. There was a slight rise to the east, then oak trees, thick brush, and other vegetation would shield us from the powerful beam of a spotlight. A hundred yards or so later we would come to the dry stream bed where the wolf tracks were spotted. They had followed us quite a ways one night.

Soon I heard a high-pitched whistle. Don was blowing across the top of an empty 22 shell. I answered. We were a couple hundred yards apart.

Up ahead, across a long sand bar, I saw the flare of a lighted match. Don had lit up another one of his roll-your-own smokes. In a husky voice he said, "Well, Slim, looks like we got skunked again." We rested some and decided to find us a spot to look toward Nerrigan Spring. As we stood there, the beam of two flashlights were working their way south, toward a back road. This was fun, and worth it all.

The two men went straight to their car, climbed in, and slammed both doors. The bright car lights were a dead give-away, in fact, it had to be turned around. That took some doing on the narrow road. Here they came, downhill toward Dodge Road.

We ran to the edge of a cut road bank and hid behind some brush and watched as the old rattley car rumbled by. We not only recognized the car, but knew who the men were. The two guys were old-timers and surely had spotlighted deer before. Why they weren't more cautious was a mystery.

Their lights were on as they walked along the hillside. Anyone could see them a mile or more away. The car wasn't turned around, and the guys made enough noise to rouse a Game Warden clear down to Medford headquarters. Their actions showed us why night hunters got a bad name.

It was 11:30 p.m. Don and I headed out across rattlesnake country. We never worried until one started buzzing. A Timber Rattler is good for that. A Diamondback won't stir up a fuss quite so quick. If a Timber Rattler gets riled up, the son-of-a-gun will start looking for you. Even then, Don and I didn't pay no never mind. Such action fit right in, caused the adrenaline to flow, neither of us got hurt, and a good time was had by us both.

That night was as black as pitch. The stars were even none too bright. But we knew our way around on instinct alone. Soon we came to a barbed wire fence. We knew it was close because of certain tree tops that were silhouetted between us and the sky. Beyond it a ways was an open field for a half mile. Across it going from northwest to southeast was an intermittent stream bed. Some places the banks were 15 or 20 feet down to a sand bar.

When Don and I walked along at night, he took the lead, and rarely ever did any talking. He walked along so quiet there were times when I'd reach out and touch him to see where he was.

About half way across the field towards Meadows Road I lost track of my leader. First I listened. Nothing. I reached out ahead of me and moved my hand back and forth as I stepped forward. Suddenly I found out why Don wasn't there. One more step and I tumbled down a 20 foot washout. I landed in a sitting position in a sand bar. Small rocks and dirt clattered down around me. There sat Don.

All he said was, "I thought you would be along pretty soon." When he fell off the bank all he did was move over two or three feet and wait. No doubt in my mind, he had a very mischievous look on his face. We chuckled about our near mishap. As for me, I didn't know if to laugh or cry. We climbed from the dry creek bottom and continued on.

Across Meadows Road was a lot of big pine trees scattered around. There was a sizeable barnyard nearby. A farmer had been putting up some hay the day before. We started across the lower end of the spot, near a corral made from 2 x 6 boards. There was a flat thing laying there, out in the open, that resembled a bale of hay. We decided to sit down and rest some before going on home.

As we relaxed I looked up toward the tree tops and made a startling discovery. About ten feet above us hung a big, six foot Jackson Fork, slowly swinging in the breeze. The sight caused our sudden departure. (A Jackson Fork is a means of lifting huge amounts of loose hay from a wagon and then dumps it in place on a hay stack. The tines are long and curved. This one was six feet long.)

From there on we came to another fence that went east and west. A ditch went along the south side where flood water ran off the fields. It went down to a good crossing at Snyder Creek. From there on home, nothing happened much. It was maybe 2 a.m. I stopped at my house, and Don trudged along for another half mile or so, where he lived.

I went to bed that night feeling pooped out and relaxed at the same time. Sleep took me into a dream world of the out-of-doors, night noises and lots of excitement. I'm sure Don felt the same way.

CHAPTER TEN
TRAP LINES TO SCHOOL

During hot weather we didn't hunt much because there was a chance the meat might sour if we had to hide out very long. But those weeks and months passed by so quickly it was hard to believe. Our next dread and worry was school that would start, and most of our plans would fall by the wayside. I hated school.

Soon the rainy season started, school was in session, and fall colors showed up everywhere. On our way to Antioch one day Don told me about a trap line he had in mind later on. He would figure out a system so the traps were not too far apart, and ten sets would be about right.

Here was another chance to learn something from my cousin Don. I didn't know the first thing about traps, how to catch an animal, especially how to skin one out. He had learned all the tricks from his Dad and older brother.

Everyone who trapped during the winter had to stay within the season. Otherwise the fur wouldn't be prime and traders wouldn't pay top price for the pelts. Trapping season started after animals of all kinds grew hair or fur dense and long enough to keep them warm during the coldest weeks of winter. Those who hibernated were lucky. I think trapping season began right after the first of the year.

On our way home from school one day we stood beneath a big yellow pine tree to watch it rain for awhile. The foliage was so dense the drops could hardly get through until it got soaked up. Don mentioned how glad he would be to get his trap line started. He picked up a stick and started tracing a route in the dirt of an ant hill as he told me his strategy.

It would be far enough away from either of our homes so the house cats or dogs wouldn't get caught. And it would run toward Snyder Creek and swing around south across the upper end of a neighbor's wood lot. The line would be about a mile long.

He hoped to catch skunks, weasels, and bobcats. Coyotes were tricky to latch onto, but his Dad had taught him how. Near the creek a raccoon might come along. It would be nice to catch an otter. Their pelts were worth a lot of money.

When the season opened, Don took me along. We spent a weekend scouting around. There were three sizes of traps, depending on how big the animal was he hoped to bag. To catch a skunk, raccoon, or weasel didn't take much, because they were always looking for something to eat. The trap would be baited, covered and anchored solid to an oak tree or deep-rooted bush.

He chose a spot along a game trail to make the set and explained every detail. A spot close to a big manzanita should be about right. It was away from the game trail about ten feet. Never put a trap directly in the trail because a deer might spring it.

The trap had a set of springs at each side of the jaws. A stout chain dangled at one end. First, he anchored the trap to a small oak tree. A dry limb from a nearby bush was handy to dig a shallow hole and make a trench from there to the anchor so the trap and chain couldn't be seen.

One of his secrets was to never touch the end of the stick he dug with, and when the job was done, throw the stick away. Next, the trap jaws were sprang open and the plate latched down. The springs were turned so they pointed in opposite directions. It resembled a letter S. He reached up and got a handful of dry moss from a dead limb, and

carefully tucked some of it under the trap plate. It kept dirt and other debris from fouling the set. The next step was to cover everything, anchor chain and all, from sight and smell. Last step was to place the bait.

He reached inside his pack sack to retrieve a half pint fruit jar, tightly sealed. The contents were unbelievable. It was the mixture of various parts taken from the insides of dead animals, and was well-seasoned to give off the most putrid odor I ever smelled. The first whiff danged near made me sick. Somehow he managed to saturate a six-inch piece of soft cloth and anchor it about three feet above the trap. A coyote could pick up that awful scent for a mile if the wind was right.

All this time Don managed to stand in one spot. It took some long reaching and stretching, but everything fell into place. He wouldn't even let me move around.

He stood up and snapped off another branch. Leaves and grass were scattered evenly over the entire coyote set like nothing was ever disturbed. I had to walk backward, being careful to put my feet in the same steps I took coming in. As Don backed up he brushed our tracks to erase as much scent as possible. Somehow, I wondered if it was all worth it. It would be something new to watch him skin and stretch a pelt. We would wait one day before the trap line was run.

Don came by around seven thirty the first day. That would allow over an hour to run the line and make it to school on time even if there was something caught. I grabbed my twenty two and lunch. We headed out at a fast walk with great anticipation.

The first two sets had been sprung. The traps were reset and well camouflaged. The next four traps hadn't been touched. Trap number seven was sprung, and number eight held a big jack rabbit by a hind leg. Don shot the animal and mumbled something about how worthless its hide was and he wouldn't bother to skin it out.

Number nine trap was south of the fence line, set a few feet from a hollow oak log. We walked around a clump of brush. There it was. We had a prize.

A few feet away was a very irate skunk. The trap jaws were clamped to the toes of his right front foot. Don grabbed my coat sleeve and advised me not to get too close. I knew what a skunk was, but had never been sprayed by one. His little beady eyes watched our every movement. The skunk was all cocked and primed to let us have it at the slightest provocation.

Don had an idea. To further my education on the skills of trapping, now would be a good time to show how to kill a skunk so he wouldn't spray. A vulnerable spot was low on the neck as he faced us. The bullet would penetrate the heart. It would die instantly. His spraying days would be over.

I took careful aim from about twenty feet away. A slight tug on the trigger, the chunk of lead hit where the gun was aimed. The animal jerked and fell flat. "Good shot," Don told me. "You killed him dead."

We both went to retrieve the kill at the same time. Don reached down and took hold of the chain that held the trap in place. Just as he pulled it tight, the skunk quivered. With its last breath the little black and white animal gave us everything it had. We were soaked with a fine mist from our knees down. Our eyes burned, and my stomach felt sick.

It took just a few minutes to skin the skunk and reset the trap. We thought we had done a good job wiping the smell from our clothes and rubber boots. Hopefully the school teacher wouldn't notice. What really happened was we had gotten used to the smell, therefore, we thought it was gone.

It was about a mile across country to the fence rail pile under a big pine tree. We always hid our guns there and today that awful smelly hide would be added. Nothing would ever bother that rank chunk of black and white fur.

We headed down to the main road. Maybe our teacher would come along in her nice car and give us a lift.

Sure enough, she broke over the hill and saw us. The beautiful black car idled to a stop. The teacher had a broad grin on her face, thinking how nice it was, two of her boys would be on time for once. She opened the door and leaned forward. I was halfway across the seat. Her smile turned into a frown and from there to anger. She gave me a shove. Don caught me before I landed in the bottom of the ditch. The door slammed shut, gears were ground into place, wheels started spinning and throwing loose gravel. The car disappeared in a cloud of dust.

We didn't have much choice but to walk the next half mile to school. Several other kids were walking along the road. A couple came over nearby and got an awful look about them. Three girls were leading and riding a big white mule. Even he flopped his ears around and moved away.

When the first bell rang it meant everyone had just five minutes to run to the toilet, then make a dash for the hand pump to get a drink. The last bell rang about the time everyone was pushing and shoving to get through the door. That day Don and I walked through alone.

Our teacher was a nice looking young woman around thirty years old, I suppose. She wore her hair in a well shaped, up-sweep fashion. I never noticed any pins that held her dark brown hair in place. When our teacher was nice it was a delight to be in her presence. But when something crossed her path to rile the woman up, I'm telling you, it would have been safer to stir up a wounded bear with a stick.

There were at least forty kids who attended school. They were scattered around in all eight grades. The youngest were at least six years of age. The older ones were from fifteen to eighteen, full grown men and women. Their temperaments run from meek to mean, but the teacher knew how to keep law and order. I am not sure where she learned all the tricks tucked up her sleeve. Surely it must have taken some practice to get as strict as she was and hold a straight face.

The first day of school that year, it was a madhouse. Petty fights and scuffles were going on inside and out. Once the noisy bunch was inside, she tapped lightly on her desk to draw attention. In a husky voice she introduced herself and told us just a little about her past history as a teacher. Certain rules and regulations were mentioned. An emphasis was put on a few as they were entered on the blackboard at the end of the room.

She continued on about such things as tardiness, cleanliness, and moral conduct at the school in general. About that time, some of the older students were conversing and making gestures to one another at the back of the room. That gave her a clue, it was time to evoke her last resort.

She got after the ones who were causing the fuss, and told them if they continued to be rowdy and wouldn't mind, she would be forced to bring into play her final asset. Her body shifted to the right and left as she cleared off the center of her desk for all eyes to see. She leaned down and pulled the lower right hand drawer out, picked up an object, and put it where everyone could get a clear view of what it was.

Dead silence fell over the room to where I could hear a single fly buzzing around. Before our eyes was a piece of rubber hose about two feet long. One end was split into

four strands. The other end was solid to form an eight inch handle. She never said a word, but stood, leaning forward, braced by her hands on the desk, and tapped her fingers lightly. She stood straight, picked it up, walked around in front of her desk and held it up for us to get a better view. It wouldn't have had any greater effect on the room full of kids if there were steel balls attached at the ends of each strand. She took a few steps backwards as though there were eyes in the back of her head, dropped the hose into the empty drawer and gently pushed it shut.

Silence was broken by her command to stand and salute the flag. Response was immediate and decisive. From that day on, to the end of the hectic school year, everyone was a model student. The most unruly teenagers never missed a chance to greet her every morning. They would almost quarrel about who would carry wood for the big furnace that sat in the corner of the room. There was a mixture of jobs that seemed to be accomplished without a fuss. Floors were kept clean, erasers dusted, and the blackboard was always kept clear. There never was a more orderly bunch of school kids.

Don and I talked about the rude awakening everyone got on opening day. I could just see the split rubber hose and how the teacher was likely to use it. Didn't seem proper to fight back because we were guilty, and you do not hit a woman.

Maybe the best way out was to fib a little and tell her the animal attacked us when we passed by a hollow log. That, no doubt, would soften her feelings and maybe spare the whip. But the closer we got to the unsmiling woman, we knew she would sense any attempt to hide the reason we smelled so bad.

We were assigned seats at the back of the room where it was colder. No one would sit nearby for obvious reasons. One tall slim girl kept a handkerchief over her nose.

The teacher faced the room full of students, pointed toward us, and said, "I ought to expel you two!" She swung her arm and pointed toward the woodshed. Don got up first and headed that way. I followed close at his heels, red-faced, and felt so embarrassed. There was a buildup of horrors that would surely befall us once we were out of sight of everyone else.

The teacher had prepared two buckets filled with hot water. She added some foul smelling stuff that nearly caused us to choke. It was ammonia.

Meanwhile a few kids went out the front door, came around to the end of the schoolhouse, and were snickering about our misfortune as they held their noses.

She handed each of us a couple rags and instructed us to start scrubbing. I washed my boots until they shined like new, and wiped my pants legs with a rung out rag. It was a little amusing watching Don. He would scrub awhile, look up to see what the school mom was doing, and start scrubbing again.

We used up both buckets of water, and danged near became asphyxiated because of fumes. But it didn't erase the skunk smell even a little. As far as our teacher was concerned, we were a total loss.

One thing that struck us later on, as she was nearby trying to help all she could, never once did we notice her wrinkle her nose or show any indication that the smell was unbearable. But she took it all in stride and did what seemed best.

That particular day was the worst one we would ever see. It was cold and wintery. The wood furnace was putting out all the heat it could. Those in the back part of the room had permission to stand by the stove and warm their hands. I felt sorry for one little blond-haired girl. She was so shy her little hands were almost blue before she would go and warm up. There would be a half dozen trying to get thawed out at once.

Don and I were stuck off in the corner where cold air took its toll. But one thing for sure, when we were around the heater, we had it all to ourselves. We were surprised the little teacher didn't send us home to change clothes and take a bath. But she knew we wouldn't show up until the next day.

Most of the women teachers back then were a special breed. Somehow, they seemed to have developed a sixth sense and knew how to discipline the most unruly student. Seems like it was usually by embarrassment one way or another. There were more kids than us who ran trap lines on their way to school to earn extra money. Don and I were an example. The others would be very careful how they took care of a trapped skunk.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
HAZARDS OF TRAPPING

That winter Don's trap line got us into more danged trouble than anything we did. We were so eager to make some extra money. The excitement and adventure of the whole thing was worth taking a chance at times, but now and then it would cause us to loose a sense of judgment and common sense.

One weekend we headed out early to scout the trap line. He had made a couple new sets that might catch a coyote or two. There was a five dollar bounty on the animal, and a prime coat would be worth a good price. It was also good bobcat country.

The first trap hadn't been touched. He took great pains to spring the trap and reset it. Maybe something had kept it from working. The next trap was sprung and held an animal the size of a bobcat. As we got closer, to our surprise, we saw it was a big house cat. It was hard to figure out how come it was so far away from a farm house. It was more than two miles to the nearest dwelling.

It was greenish-black in color. The big yellow eyes were set wide apart. I've never seen a house cat that size before or since. We tried our best to turn it loose. Boy was he on the peck, a heavy coat didn't help. It bit and scratched right through the cloth. We could wind up getting hurt.

After awhile there was only one thing left to do. The animal was suffering. Don decided to shoot it. There wasn't much use to bury it so I helped Don skin it out. The hide was beautiful and in full prime. It should bring a good price. There wasn't a thing caught when we checked the rest of the trap line.

Don's Dad was planning to ship some pelts off soon. They usually sent all the hides at one time. Don would send his prize cat at that time.

For the next few days nothing much happened except wasting our time going to school. Finally, Don got a check in the mail. With it was a list of hides showing the price for each one. The cat hide had brought one dollar and eighty five cents. That was ten cents more than a skunk skin would bring and not near so smelly.

He came by to visit that afternoon to show me the check. The cat hide brought a good price. Maybe we should pursue the possibility of catching a few more. After all there were plenty of them around. We just as well thin 'em down some.

About a mile up country lived an elderly couple who raised lots of cats. They were the two who ran the Beagle Post Office and Gas Station. One day I walked up to get our mail. While I waited in the shade of the gas pumps there was a lot of movement behind the curtains of their house. Two cats came out in sight and looked out the big, plate glass window. Soon another cat or two appeared and more followed. So far I counted seven looking at me.

Most of them were light buckskin color. Later on I noticed some had black and white spots. The thing that amazed me, most every window at the side of the house was full of cats. I counted twenty one in all, and there were more wandering around outside. A big one was carrying a mouse out toward the chicken pen.

All the cats I saw and counted that day were Angora type, and weren't near as big as the one Don caught. But maybe we might try to catch one, send the hide off, and see if it would sell.

On my way home, a plan began to develop in my mind. There were at least thirty some odd cats at the Beagle residence, and more coming on. It made sense they would never miss a couple. The outside cats spent most of their time hunting. Their range varied from a couple hundred yards to a half mile at least.

That evening, Don dropped by to visit. Said he had been thinking about setting up another trap line. Maybe we should try our luck thinning out the neighbor's cats. After all, they were poor folks like us. It cost a lot to feed all those feline critters. They didn't have the heart to get rid of any on their own. So, it seemed to us like it would be only proper to help them out. Don brought along a couple small traps. The country was heavily wooded. Rodents were abundant. We explored around some and found a half rotten hollow log. It would be a likely place to make a set. Another set at the edge of a clearing seemed like a good place. There was a grove of pine trees nearby and lots of oak and brush.

Somehow, I had a funny feeling about all this. The way the old lady talked to those cats and how she was always followed by one or two, caused me to wonder if we should try to catch one. Don and I considered this as we sat down to rest. Why not catch one and see if she missed it?

We sprang the trap near the clearing and left it. On our way home from school the next day we were thinking about the cat trap. He figured maybe I should go and pay a visit to the elderly couple. If a cat was missing, surely she would be worried. Then we would check the trap.

I whomped up an idea to make my visit so it wouldn't look suspicious. My Mom helped out. She wanted to mail a letter and pick up a gallon jug of kerosene for the lamps. With the letter in one hand and the clear glass cider jug in the other, me and my dog headed out. There was a dime in the bottom of my pocket to pay for the fuel.

As the kindly old lady pumped the kerosene from a fifty gallon drum, she started asking questions, and was anxious to know if us boys had any trap lines nearby. One of her big cats called Artie was missing. He was over two hours late for his supper. She was worried sick at the thought of him being in a trap or maybe got run over.

I was dumbfounded that she would miss a cat so soon. I promised to check with Don about traps nearby. It was almost certain our trap held her pet in its jaws.

When I returned home, Don was sitting on the doorstep waiting for me. He and Mom listened carefully as I told the story. The couple's cat, Artie, hadn't come home and they were worried sick.

We never wasted any time to run out to check the trap. We approached the half rotten hollow log with caution. Sure enough, the big yellow cat was caught, hard and fast, by its left front leg. A small chaparral bush the trap was anchored to was half gone. The cat had chewed it to bits.

The injured animal growled and spit every time we made a move. I could shoot it, but somehow I just couldn't do it. Don felt the same way. We would set the poor old cat free if it took all night.

Don wore a heavy pair of high-topped, laced boots. It should be simple to put his big foot on the trap spring and depress it to set the cat free. The idea was sound until he tried it. If he hadn't pulled back quickly, his pants leg would have been torn to shreds. The cat really made a fuss. We had to figure out a better way. I cut a limb from a bush that was forked at one end. Maybe the cat could be held down while the spring was depressed. It almost worked. But the animal was furious. It thrashed around so much it could have suffered further injury. We backed off a ways and worked on a different strategy.

I went back home and rounded up a couple of gunny sacks. Hopefully we could wrap enough burlap around the cat to hold the rascal down and set him free. Care must be taken or someone could get bit.

Don stuffed one sack inside the other. There would be four layers of burlap between him and the cat. I approached from the opposite side to draw its attention by scuffing my feet. Quickly, he tossed the sack over Artie and held him down. I depressed the spring and the foot slipped free of the trap jaws. We both jumped back to watch. The cat ran away fifty feet, and went nearly to the top of a big pine tree. He never moved as we watched and wondered how bad hurt he was.

When we left for home, Don carried the gunny sacks, and there were two steel traps slung over his shoulder. Today marked the end of our endeavors to cash in on house cat hides. But we had to confess about Artie being in our trap, though he was set free, very much alive.

The next evening I made a special trip to tell the people about Artie. She was sore about the whole thing and I got a twenty five cent lecture on what bad boys we were for trapping wild animals in the first place. She made me promise we would never set any traps within a mile of their place. The kindly old lady thanked me for turning Artie loose. She knew it took a lot of effort and we could have suffered bad injuries. I departed for home feeling meek as a lamb.

About a month later her and I were talking while the mail was being sorted. She said that Artie came home, but his left front leg was missing, except for a short stub. As we conversed, Artie walked across the yard limping on three legs. He was in time for his supper again.

I felt sad and danged near cried on my way home. I knew Don would feel bad and glad at the same time. It seemed like from then on, trapping wasn't near as exciting as it was at first.

CHAPTER TWELVE
BUCK AT DEAD HORSE SPRING

A chance for excitement and need for meat nearly always set Don and I to making plans. It was nothing to take off on a night hunt and be gone from three o'clock in the afternoon until the next day. We were known to walk long distances and follow ridges and canyons to our destination, but would try and choose a place to kill a deer without drawing the attention of the local citizens. Now and then we would invite Don's older brother, Buster, to go along.

He had been on many a hunt and knew a lot of tricks that Don and I were just beginning to catch on to. Between the three of us we agreed on a place about three miles east of Beagle. But this time we planned to drive within a quarter mile of a secluded spring located on the side of a hill.

We headed out in Don's Pontiac about an hour before dark. No one would suspect a thing as we bounced along a crooked road, out across an open field.

We could see where our destination was by the green streak trailing down the hillside. The bubbling spring flowed the same volume of water winter and summer, and was the only source for over a mile in any direction. In years past a homesteader used the spring for domestic use and to irrigate a garden area. A small dam was built to capture the surplus water. There were dense thickets of pussy willow at the spring and along the runoff ditch for a hundred yards.

The three of us got out and started looking for arrowheads. Our plan was to spread out, take our time, and make it look good. Buster would work his way uphill toward the spring and case the place. He checked for fresh man tracks and took note if deer had been coming in to drink. A good sized white oak tree grew near the spring. A limb extended straight out from the trunk over ten feet above ground. It turned up, supporting a wide, thick collection of branches. It would be easy to climb, too, because of knots and uneven places on the tree. The only drawback was the main trail leading to the spring came directly beneath the limb we would sit on. But it was worth a chance.

We casually walked back toward the car after sundown. There was only one farmhouse visible from where we parked. There were no house lights on yet. They appeared to be away from home. We carried high powered guns that night for no other reason than to try them out. My gun was an octagon barreled, long tom twenty five-thirty five. Buster carried a thirty ought six, and Don had a heavy, single shot thirty five caliber. It shot the biggest bullet I have ever seen, and kicked hard unless it was held right.

Don sized things up as best he could in the closing darkness. He climbed the tree to the big limb, sat down and scooted out to make room for us. I sat in the middle and Buster was next to the tree.

Mosquitoes were bad. If one of us moved to swat one of the pesky little insects it would scare deer away. The only way to dislodge the nasty little things was to brush them loose in slow motion. Don chose to suffer because he was hanging out in the open.

A slight breeze came up from the open field south of us. Tree leaves made a shuffling sound and caused cold chills to cover my body. There were a few night noises to keep us alert. Because of that, Don flashed his light around the clearing. Maybe a deer had slipped in. We saw a raccoon fooling around the spring. Looked like he was trying to

reach the water to wash his front feet. He acted curious for an instant, then went back to work. The light never bothered him at all.

In about twenty minutes Don flashed the spot light again. There was nothing. The three of us were sitting close, but it was so quiet it seemed like we were clear out of hearing distance from one another. Each of us was enveloped in our thoughts, yet very alert, and were tuned in to the noises of the forest. Suddenly there was a movement directly beneath us. We froze to our perch. The first thing I saw was a big set of antlers right under me. A four-point buck walked toward the spring. Don slowly raised the barrel of the thirty five Winchester, took careful aim, and turned on the spot light. He squeezed the trigger. Flame belched forth at least six feet, and the noise was deafening. The concussion from the blast danged near knocked the three of us off the limb. Seemed like the sound echoed through the hills for half a minute.

The wounded deer fell sideways downhill and through a patch of willows. The three of us were on the ground in an instant. Buster found the deer first. It was very much dead. The bullet from the thirty five struck just behind the shoulders. The hole it made coming out took quite a chunk with it. I could double my fists together and shove them through the opening. Don and Buster dragged the deer toward the fence. I carried the artillery. Boy, those three guns were heavy! They gutted the deer and packed it to the car.

I didn't know what time my watch said but it was so dark we could hardly make out a thing. We couldn't use the car lights to drive by, so Buster and I climbed up on the front fenders. As Don drove along slowly we would do our best to guide him down the road, past a big barn and on out to the main drag. We stopped awhile to look and listen, then headed for home. Our destination was the oak tree behind my folks chicken house.

The deer was skinned out and the meat divided. Dad offered to bury the hide. This was where most of our successful hunts ended up. The west end of the chicken house protected us from view of the main road. The old skinning tree saw a lot of venison during the depression years.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
SHOCKER AT COAL MINE MOUNTAIN

Depression years were rough years to try and survive. I can't imagine what happened to people who lived in a town or large city. How did they ever make it?

Country folks and hillbillies (mountain men) were equipped with knowledge to take advantage of resources at hand to survive such a crisis. No one had any money to speak of but we had plenty to eat and a roof over our heads. Common sense was sort of like a sixth sense. When there was a need for something, somehow we figured out the best way to get it and not hurt a soul.

Killing deer out of season to keep food on the table was the most prevalent, and common sense helped us figure the best way to prevent being arrested.

It is difficult to describe the feelings of excitement during the tense moments of a night hunt. Just making plans to venture out was enough to cause the loss of sleep. I would be awake late at night if Don and I talked about a night hunt. The loss of sleep wasn't because of worry, no way. But the excitement and anticipation caused the adrenaline to flow just a little and sleep wasn't allowed to interfere.

To actually be out there was excitement beyond comprehension. To this day, I can't think of anything that would remotely compare with the intensity of a night time hunt. Those wonderful times were recreation beyond anyone's imagination.

A seventy five pound deer didn't last too long with two families working on it. There were beans and potatoes too, but the meat rounded out a good rib-sticking meal. It was time to plan another hunt.

In the early days, gold miners and homesteaders were scattered throughout the hills. There are still places where there are remnants of fruit orchards and scraps of lumber and logs in an opening or flat piece of ground. A good spring of water would be nearby. Several orchards still produced apples of several varieties. There were also pears and figs.

We knew where there was an abandoned orchard up on the mountain, northeast of Cave Rock. There was an abandoned coal mine about half a mile below it that would be a good place to leave the car.

The mine was about a three mile drive northwest of Beagle. Someone tried to develop it for a couple years. The coal was fine and crumbly. Someone told me later it would take another two thousand years before it would be any good.

In front of the mine tunnel was a flat plateau-like place about a half acre in size. It was created from the tailings or debris taken from the mine to get at the coal. It was an excellent place to park the car.

Don and I decided to give it a try some night during the week. There would be less chance of someone wandering around than on a weekend. We headed up the crooked, winding, rough road. The motor heated up and more water was added to the radiator. It gave us a chance to see if anyone followed us up the hill.

We continued on toward the coal mine and parked at the edge of the plateau. Before the guns were uncovered, we looked around for fresh tire tracks or evidence of hunters or sightseers. Usually there would be an empty lunch sack or candy bar wrapper crumpled and tossed. Crushed cigarettes were also a clue.

On an east slope it starts getting dark fast when the sun goes down. But there was plenty light left to see our way up a draw that lead to a two acre apple orchard. We loaded our guns, grabbed our flashlights and headed out.

As we walked along quietly through dense timbered country, a certain feeling crept over me. The air was so pure, and the smell of the fir trees was like a tonic. It would be nice to own some of this country. My home would be up here, further away from civilization. How blissful it would be.

Suddenly the woods seemed to come alive! Three deer bounded off around the hillside. Blue jays squawked and carried on in the tree tops. An interrupted squirrel was raising heck from an oak tree nearby.

As we approached the orchard, Don started whistling a tune as best he could. It didn't turn out too well so he began to talk and ask me a question or two. If there happened to be someone at the orchard, they wouldn't shoot when we walked by. If there was a law man waiting we would suffer the consequences. Some folks get mighty shaky and nervous while on a stand waiting for a deer to come in. They might shoot and ask questions later.

No one around, so all systems were go for a night in the forest. We climbed up in a tree full of nice red apples. Boy, it was unusual having fruit so close and handy. They were sweet and juicy. But Don wouldn't allow me to finish one. Said the chomping and crunching would scare a deer a half mile away. But I tucked a couple inside my shirt for future emergency use.

We sat facing different directions and would take turns flashing our lights. Chilly night air came up from a canyon to the north. Heavy coats felt good, especially when I turned up my collar. A slight breeze caused an apple or two to fall. Darkness had settled in. Maybe something had come to eat fruit.

Don flashed his part of the orchard first. Nothing. In fifteen minutes it would be my turn. Something must be keeping the deer away. In two hours time not a one showed up.

Don was continually sniffing the air. The smell of tobacco smoke carries a long way in the still night air. Sometimes other odors or smells dominate the scene. We knew a skunk would louse thing up, but there wasn't one around.

It was beginning to get tiresome. To sit so long in one position and hardly moving caused a man to loose interest. But our hopes were soon rewarded.

An audible sound of some kind was within hearing distance. The noise was different somehow. It was a cross between man and beast. But as alert and sensitive as we were, it was impossible to sort out. Cold chills came up my back and down the outside of my arms. Don felt the same way. It was spooky and caused the adrenaline to trickle in.

The sound became more audible, but not consistent. It would be quite plain for a few seconds, then quit. But it was coming closer, right toward our tree.

It sounded as though someone started to hum a tune, didn't like the lyrics and started over. But at any rate we ought to brace up and look wise. Someone might have followed us. If so, to sit and wait might be a mistake. He would be making some kind of human noise to prevent being shot for a deer.

There were two young men in an apple tree about as shook up and nervous as could be. The only thing to do was react the same way. Don tried to whistle again, but with his luck, whoever was coming along might think it was a vicious wild animal in distress. Before we started talking we listened briefly. The humming sound was close. Don shifted his weight for a better view and caused half dozen apples to plunk to the ground. The noise stopped. That was strange. By now, we were too dumbfounded to do anything.

The next time, the humming sound was so close it seemed to be beneath the tree next to us. There was something moving. It was black and moved from side to side. In the excitement Don turned his spot light on the intruder. One of the biggest porcupines I have ever seen lay still and quiet. As we watched the animal from the apple tree, it started its search for apples again. Every time the animal moved he would make a humming sound. Soon the fresh apples that fell from our tree were starting to become part of his supper. We watched in amazement when he took one between his front paws and sat up like a squirrel and began nibbling as he turned it round and around.

Neither of us had ever seen such a thing in our lives. Somehow we felt almost disappointed that the humming was made by a beast instead of a man. We had been expecting the worst.

We talked for a moment and decided to give it up. I felt a little weak while descending the tree trunk to the ground. The porcupine wandered away.

We headed out through the orchard toward the trail. It was so dark going down the canyon we flipped on a light now and then to make sure the path was still there. The only sound to shatter the still, quiet night was a hoot owl about half mile away.

It took awhile to get down to level ground, and wouldn't be long before we were sitting in the car, drinking coffee and eating sandwiches.

The coal mine was in a well protected place. Doug fir timber was tall and big. No one could see the flicker of a flashlight for more than a hundred yards. It should be plenty safe to use our spot light to pick our way. I was tired of pussy-footing along in the dark. It was a welcome sight as it reflected off the trees and vegetation underneath.

About the time our light flashed, there was a noise up ahead. Don pointed it in that direction but there were no shining eyes. Whatever it was made a person jump when it took off.

But my light picked up a glimmer through the trees. An animal was looking toward us. The shining eyes were different, almost white, and they flickered. Our guns were loaded and ready.

The eyes seemed to be wide apart like a cow. But there were no cattle in the country or their tracks would have shown up in the road. It wasn't a bear because their eyes show up sort of reddish. These were almost white and appeared to be blinking constantly. But our spot lights couldn't pick up the shape of an animal. Jokingly, I told Don maybe it was a ghost. In a gruff voice, he said, "Don't be silly." But, I'd bet anything, if I would've got behind him and said, "Boo!" real loud as my hand touched his shoulder, he would have riddled the hapless thing with lead, and his gun was a single-shot rifle.

We were standing at the edge of a small clearing. Our lights reflected off trees directly ahead. The animal was standing several yards beyond a four foot Doug fir tree. It might give us a little protection if it charged us. We crept across the clearing and held our lights steady. The thing never moved. Boy, this would have been prime time for a Bigfoot story, but back then, he was never heard of yet.

We knew something alive was about a hundred feet beyond the big tree. But there were numerous small trees and underbrush that distorted the beam of the lights.

Finally, Don said, "Why don't you take careful aim so the bullet will hit between its eyes. I'll hold the light." I took aim and thumbed the hammer back but he wanted to get just a little closer to be sure and make a dead shot. Both lights were shining toward it. A faint, black object began to appear. The eyes were brighter, but it never moved. Another step or two, and believe me, I was ready to shoot. To stop my efforts, Don pushed my

gun barrel upward and said, "Hold it! Don't shoot!" Beyond a thicket of vine maple, Don's car began to take shape. As the flashlights shined through the underbrush and reflected off the car windows, it appeared to be blinking eyes. In just a couple more seconds the windshield would have been blown to bits.

Every time something like that turned up negative, it was a little disappointing. But if my twenty-five thirty-five would have fired, two boys would have rode home in a car without the protection of a front glass window.

The excitement of the evening was tiring. We decided to spend the night and get some rest. I didn't realize a man could go to sleep and start snoring so quick, but Don did just that.

After daylight, we rallied around and looked things over. I shot a big overgrown woodpecker-like bird, and we roasted it for breakfast. On our way home we talked about a lot of adventurous things, and decided we ought to try again some place else. Why no deer approached the orchard last night was a mystery.

Deer and other wildlife seemed to have disappeared from the face of the earth. After the night on Coal Mine Mountain, we hunted twenty two nights and never saw a thing. It was cold and miserable sitting in a tree or behind a blind. Sometimes it poured down rain and snowed a little.

Don and I hunted this way because of necessity. Straight red beans were getting old. Soon, it became a challenge and we tried every trick we knew, but nothing worked. Sooner or later our luck would change. The key words were, "Be careful and cautious."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
WILD HONEY

There were other ways to supplement our food supply besides hunting deer and other wildlife. The Beagle country was heavily wooded. Oak trees were one of the dominant species. Many were old and big. When a branch died and fell to the ground, in most cases it would leave a hollow place. The opening would extend down into the tree trunk. The hollow oaks were ideal for honey bees to take up their abode and fill the tree with honey.

It was fun to sit by a small stream or spring and watch the worker bees. Each one would take on water and fly off in a certain direction. After observing several bee's direction of flight, a man could locate the tree every time.

If a honey bee raised up and flew straight from the water, its hive was close by. If it raised up and made a circle or two to gain altitude, the tree was farther out.

Don and I used a different method. We took a jar lid and put a spoon full of honey on it, and placed the lid on a stump or rock. Soon, a honey bee would find it. He would tank up and leave. Upon his return, a couple bees would follow. In a short while, bees would be flying back and forth from the jar lid to the hive. If a tree couldn't be located, the process was repeated and another bee tree would be branded.

If anyone found a bee tree, it was standard procedure to put an X on the trunk about eye level high. I have seen them ten or twelve inches across and chopped deep enough to last the life of the tree. Country people honored the claim. I never heard of a bee tree rustler.

Old timers depended on a bee tree or two for a winter supply of honey. It was used in cooking and various other ways. It was a health food, grown wild.

Many times a bee tree cutting turned out to be a celebration. Picnic lunches turned out to be part of a potluck dinner. Bets were taken as to how many gallons a hive would produce. The winner would not only take home the money but a gallon of honey and a bee box full of bees as well.

During those years Don and I hunted together, we chopped our brand on several bee trees. There may be a couple still standing. All a wild bee hive means to people now days is a menace to steer clear of. They think something should be done to get the stinging insects away, burn them out, or apply a lethal spray to kill the bees off.

I feel sorry for the younger generation in so many ways. No one seems to know anything about real outdoor sports and fun things to do. In fact I'll bet there isn't one man in a hundred who would know the first thing about how to find a bee tree. If he did, it would go untouched for fear of being stung.

To me the good old days are something to remember and write about. Maybe some modern day teenager will take hold and give something a try.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
BIG BEAR TRAP

During the tough years of the depression, people had to rely on one another for help on the farm. To harvest crops before the rainy season was usually a hurry up situation to get everything under cover. During the winter months in a good year, people would live and eat pretty well. Pantries were loaded with jars filled with all sorts of fruit and vegetables. At one end of the room was a large, bug proof, wooden chest. The inside was partitioned off. Compartments were filled with dried pears, peaches, and a couple varieties of beans and maybe some black-eyed peas. Potatoes had to be protected to prevent freezing. An even temperature was necessary so they wouldn't spoil.

The best way to store the staple food was to dig a hole down about four feet deep and three or four feet across. It should be round. Potatoes were more apt to spoil in a square hole because they had a tendency to stick in the corners.

A layer of straw, dry grass or hay lined the bottom. Potatoes were dumped in carefully to prevent bruising. A thick layer of mulch covered the potatoes on top. The best place to dig the potato hole was in the dirt floor of a barn or some other weatherproof out building.

Some farmers were able to dig root cellars where drainage was good and the water table low. They varied in size. A finished cellar was at least fourteen feet long, ten feet wide, and deep enough for a tall man to stand up in. Shelves and bins lined each side and across the back. The roof was made of heavy material and covered with a thick layer of dirt. The entrance was a two-sided door that covered a four by six foot opening. Steps went down to the floor.

Once the cellar was built, a wide variety of vegetables was stored there. The more perishable stuff was stored toward the front of a shelf or on the floor. I've seen watermelons two feet long and banana squash over three feet in length laying there.

Ventilation amounted to one or two wooden chimneys that protruded through the center of the roof at the front and back. They were covered with rodent-proof screens.

The older buildings and homes people lived in were built in the late eighteen or early nineteen hundreds. There were a few built out of logs with split shake roofs. Some of the fireplace chimneys were made of clay, held together on the outside with two inch sticks laid crisscross like a rail fence.

The general lay out of farm buildings was the dwelling constructed on a rise or knoll for good drainage. A short distance away was the little outhouse with a crescent cut in the door. The barn, chicken house and corn crib were farther away because of smell and flies. There was a hog pen with a shed at one end and sometimes an open storage for machinery and wagons while not in use.

There was another small building fairly close by. It was called the smokehouse. The structure was maybe eighteen feet wide by twenty four feet long. There was no ceiling. A floor was built down each side and across the back. The center, from the door back a ways was left open. The dirt floor would allow the farmer to build a small fire that would cause lots of smoke, the last phase to cure pork.

Overhead were heavy cross beams with wooden pegs or spikes protruding out from the sides and spaced about eighteen or twenty inches apart.

In the early fall, hog butchering time was a big event. Neighbors would lend a hand because it took a lot of muscle to take care of five or six hogs. Butchering and cutting

meat was a two-day job. The meat was salted down in a huge wooden chest that sat on the floor in one corner. After a period of time each piece was removed and washed off carefully. Heavy string was attached and hung from the beams overhead. The final phase of the curing process would start.

Some of the newer people who established residence in later years weren't so fortunate, and had to rely on other means to keep food on the table. Such was the plight of the Cases and Walkers.

It was a good thing we didn't get sick of deer meat and gravy, red beans, and Irish potatoes. Starvation would certainly have taken its toll. But even so, it was nice to have something different now and then. We decided to try and kill a black bear. The meat is similar to pork, but maybe sweeter.

Don's brother, Buster, had purchased a huge bear trap. It had two massive jaws, 14 inches across, and was lined with sharp teeth. They were held open by two big springs. The overall length was four feet. It could hold a five or six hundred pound bear or maybe bigger. The anchor chain was made of tough steel. It was twelve feet long and capable of holding back hundreds of pounds before it broke.

Two men carried the trap and other equipment to the remote area to make the set. Once they reached the location it took half a day to prepare a site.

The trap was taken to a place called Chimney Rock. It was quite secluded, and there was less chance that another man would be in that country unless he had a trap line there. Buster had hunted in the Cave and Chimney Rock country and had seen evidence of bear activity. The smallest bear around was at least a long yearling.

To accomplish the job, they built a pen out of fir poles. It was eight feet square and two feet high. The structure was near a tree at least twelve or fourteen inches in diameter. Laurel and oak trees grew nearby that would help hide the trap. The chain was anchored to a tree.

There were two heavy duty "C" clamps used to pull the hefty springs together at the same time. The tongue went over one jaw and was placed in a notch on the plate. Clamps were carefully removed and hung up on a solid tree limb close to the set. If a man stepped between the trap's jaws he could reach them and turn himself loose. The log pen would prevent such an accident, but just in case, the clamps were handy.

Two signs were posted in plain view of anyone approaching the pen. The large letters, red on white, said, "BEAR TRAP". Every precaution was taken to prevent a tragedy. The trap was covered with dry leaves and pine needles and baited with honey and honeycomb. Some apples and pears were scattered nearby to attract the big animal's attention.

It was nearly dark by the time Buster and Don returned home. That night at the supper table there was much conversation about catching a bear and how nice it would be to enjoy a different kind of meat. Buster planned to wait a day before he checked the trap.

The men got an early start the following morning and drove along up a rough, rutted dirt road toward Chimney Rock. There was a good turn around at the end of the road. It was about a half a mile to where the trap had been set.

Buster was in the lead and carried his gun. Don trudged along behind, walking far enough back so he wouldn't get slapped in the face with a limb.

Suddenly, the men stopped in their tracks. There was a loud clanking and banging around up ahead. They walked forward through a bunch of stunted Doug Fir trees. A huge, black bear raised up from what was left of the pole pen. The ground was torn up, and some of the bark was missing from a tree the trap was anchored to.

Buster checked his gun. There was a shell in the barrel and five more behind it in the magazine. As they approached, the animal raised up to face his tormenters. Buster took careful aim and made a dead shot. It didn't take long to dress the bear out. The big job was to drag the heavy carcass up to the car.

It was a cold day. The black hide was left on to protect the meat while being dragged across the forest floor. It would be skinned out immediately after they got home. If left on too long the black fir would absorb heat and cause the meat to sour.

They covered the sprung trap with debris and would pick it up at a later date. No one would try to pack it off.

It didn't take long to get home. When the car pulled up the driveway, everyone knew something had happened. I noticed the car go by and went up to have a look.

The big black animal was being dragged toward a tree. I watched as they prepared to hang it from a big oak limb, head down. I stood next to it and looked up at the hind feet. The nose was touching the ground and they were two feet above my head. At the time, I was almost six feet tall.

The bear meat was good. The fat would be rendered and used to cook with. Some of the best doughnuts I've ever eaten were cooked in bear grease. Some of the old-timers put it on their leather boots. It soaked through fast and caused the material to be pliable and soft, but wouldn't necessarily be waterproof. A mixture of beef tallow and bear grease did a pretty good job shedding water.

The hide was stretched, cleaned and dried. It cost too much to have it tanned. But it was used as rawhide to lace snow shoes and various other things that could be wrapped and held together. Nobody wasted a thing from any animal killed.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN
RATTLESNAKE FLAT

While Don and I were growing up at Beagle it was easy to find work during the summer and sometimes on weekends during the school year. One of my first jobs was driving derrick.

A hay rack filled with a couple tons of hay would pull up at the end of the barn. A big contraption with five or six curved tines were pushed down through the hay at one end of the wagon. The Jackson Fork would carry the load up to the mow and latch into a track that ran the full length of the barn. It could be dumped anywhere along the way. The load was pulled up by one horse. He walked forward to pull it up and walked backward to let the empty fork down.

I was ten or eleven years old when I got my first paying job for one dollar a day. I worked hard and put in a lot of hours for what I got.

As I grew older and gained experience I worked on a horse-drawn spray rig, spraying pear trees on the Dodge Ranch, and drove a big team of horses pulling a mowing machine and hay rake. There were not bailers back then, so the hay was piled into shocks from windrows made by a long, high-wheeled rake.

I shocked many a ton of hay and helped haul it to the barn every summer. By the time I was fifteen years old my reputation as a good hand was well established. It was the same way for my cousin, Don Case.

I spent many a day working along side my Dad. He was a man about five foot seven and weighed a hundred and fifteen pounds. He wasn't a fast worker, but he never stopped. When everyone else was looking for shade to rest, he would wipe his brow and keep on going. My Dad taught me all I know about work. He told me one time, that in order to work a full nine hour day he should put in at least ten hours to make up for the lost time it took to get a drink of water and go to the rest room.

It seemed to me that the country folks who wanted to work didn't have much trouble finding a job. My folks taught us to be optimistic and think positive. They accomplished this by setting an example. If there was a chance to do something different to make a living, if it seemed reasonable, they tried it.

In 1933, my folks got a chance to bid on a job as mail carriers. They talked it over for some time before the final day to submit their bid. The route started at the Beagle Post Office. It was over a thirty mile drive and up to 40 or 50 customers to deliver to. The route included the east fork of Evans Creek and a couple of loops off to the east. It was called a star route and mail would be delivered Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

Dad got a registered envelope in the mail one sun-shining day. He had won the bid and was now a registered mail carrier, and Mom was his legal assistant.

They travelled the route and delivered mail the first four years at five hundred dollars a year. The second term he bid seven hundred and fifty dollars. They ran the route from 1933 to 1940.

During those years the money earned from carrying mail brought us a lot of things. The biggest item purchased was an eighty acre parcel of ground that laid southwest of the Beagle Post Office. It cost five hundred dollars, one hundred dollars down and five dollars a month.

As I look back, teenagers had so much going for them. I never heard the word, "dope", until I grew up. Just beyond the front door of my home were so many fun things to do. The thrills and spills, blood curdling and hair raising events were common for a country boy. But we had to cause things to happen, being careful not to hurt anyone or damage another man's property. I've always felt sorry for those who were forced to grow up in the city.

Don and I made a good team, working and planning together. What one wanted to do the other would back him up. And needless to say, we did invent exciting things to do.

Around the first of the October in 1938, Don came by to visit and listen to western music over our battery-powered radio. His seventeenth birthday was on the fifth. He would like to celebrate a little early by doing some night hunting. He pulled a brand new three cell flashlight from his coat, a birthday present from his brother.

By turning the lens clockwise the beam pulled down to the finest spot I'd ever seen. Turn it counter clockwise and it became a flood light. It put my old two cell to shame. We just had to try out his new light.

He and I talked about a lot of things and places to go for quite awhile and finally decided to go up country and try out another abandoned apple orchard. We planned to walk all the way. By cutting across country the trip would be about five miles.

That afternoon, we headed out around 3:00. We took our heavy guns along on the off chance of seeing a bear. No one ever paid much attention when two men walked along carrying guns. It wasn't uncommon to see cougar tracks or where a couple timber wolves crossed a sandy dry wash. The place we shied around was the Beagle Post Office. Those people would harp about anything that didn't look right. It wasn't much trouble to cut across a neck of timber to bypass the place.

It felt good to be going on another adventure as we walked along the dirt road. There was a certain thrill about it. So many unknowns were in store that it kept a young man on his toes. We knew where to go and what to try and do once we got there. But all the obstacles, hazards, and spooky feeling in between was such a thrill for us two night time hunters.

We had become accustomed to most of the sounds and noises in the forest at night. But ever so often there was a racket or movement that caused us to stop and stand back to back. A few times I danged near shinnied up a tree to do my looking.

We left the road, crawled through a barbed wire fence and stood at the edge of a heavily timbered and brushy flat. It was covered with oak and laurel. Chaparral and manzanita grew in thick patches. A few pine trees grew tall in between.

We took advantage of the tall tree tops to keep us going in a northerly direction. A dead top up ahead, or one with two or three tops, were good guides. The mountain range where we were headed could be seen from each tree.

Soon we started climbing up the end of a ridge. There was a trap line trail that passed along the top for a couple miles and broke off down into a saddle between two mountains. Below us about one hundred yards was Snyder Creek.

The creek wasn't running much water. It was easy to get across to the field beyond. At one time alfalfa grew here in abundance. But due to lack of care there were only patches here and there, the rest was grown up with tar weed and foxtail.

We stayed close to the creek as we went in a northerly direction, then cut across the upper end of the field toward the orchard. We followed an old obscure road up a little hill to the five acre orchard.

The trees, although old, were vigorous and quite productive. They were loaded with several varieties of apples, and there were three pear trees near the west side. The abundance of fruit should attract deer, bear and a few other animals that grazed at night.

Don and I looked around for recent kills and sampled an apple or two. We chose a big tree near the center of the orchard, and at dusk, climbed up and got settled for a long, quiet wait.

Darkness settled in fast because of mountains on three sides. Boy, was it quiet for about half an hour. Mosquitoes weren't too bad, but the familiar night sounds soon became quite audible. The Great Horned owl was my favorite. They seem to travel alone. There was one up the hillside that would hoot every two or three minutes. Another would answer a half mile away. Bull bats were prevalent. They would go into a power dive from great heights in their relentless efforts to catch night insects in flight.

Between the orchard and the open field was a strip of hardwoods and brush. Something was going on there. A lot of stomping and thumping sounds indicated a deer might be pawing at mushrooms. Don flashed his high powered light, but there was nothing, not even shining eyes. A band of coyotes started yipping up on the hill and were headed our way. Every now and then an apple would plunk to the ground. A buildup of noises like that causes goose bumps and cold chills at times. It was spooky not being able to see what caused some of the sound.

In a few minutes Don flashed his light again. There was nothing. The suspense was killing. Trying to look every direction at once could cause muscle cramps from head to toe.

Our method of spotlighting was to flash the area around us about every twenty minutes. We took turns especially at an orchard. We usually sat back to back to see both directions.

It was my turn to turn on my two cell spot light. It was strange, but there wasn't a thing. As I was looking along the beam of light Don moved quickly toward me. Came danged near knocking me off my perch. His husky voice caused me to turn and look toward where he was pointing. Some distance away was a sight that chilled me to the bone.

It was times like this I was mighty glad Don was with me. He was the stronger one of the two and automatically knew exactly what to do. Many times I saw Don make fast and decisive decisions and he was never wrong. Now was a heck of a good time to do everything he asked.

Almost half a mile away there were three lights headed our way. Two were headlights from a car. The other was a powerful search light mounted on the driver's side. As the car moved slowly along up the old road toward the orchard, the strong beam moved back and forth, slow motion. I was amazed how far the light could reach.

There was only two words uttered for the next ten minutes, when Don said, "Follow me." He never had to tell me twice. I imitated nearly every movement he made. Before we descended from our perch, he removed the shell from the chamber of his gun. I followed his actions. We hit the ground about the same time. I landed first only because a danged limb snapped off and speeded up my descent.

We lined out across the orchard directly toward the oncoming car. The idea was to put distance between us and the orchard. When the search light was about to hit us, we dropped flat. It shined bright off the trees and brush by us. When it passed, we jumped up and ran.

When the car got too close for comfort it was time to disappear from sight. We picked a spot behind chaparral brush. Our guns and flashlights were covered with dry foxtail and leaves so nothing would reflect light. We laid flat to the ground as the rig approached. Just before the spotlight came near we covered our faces with our coat sleeves. The dark color of our clothes couldn't be seen through the heavy foliage of the brush.

It was indeed nerve-wracking to wait. The rumble of the car motor was getting closer. The light was stronger. We lay still, hardly daring to breathe. The car drifted slowly past, turned uphill into the orchard and stopped. The beam of the light reflected off the hillside.

Don started coming to life. We picked up our guns and flashlights. The road barely showed as it wandered along through the weeds toward safety.

We ran side by side as fast as we dared in the darkness. Suddenly, another rude awakening popped up between us. A big dark-colored timber rattlesnake was almost across the road when we came along.

A rattler nearly always sounds a warning when frightened. No one had to tell us to move. The horrible sound caused two night hunters to practically become airborne. Both lights were searching for the culprit at once. Near the center of the road lay the coiled reptile, rattles sticking up one side, shaking rapidly, and the big flat head poised to strike at the slightest provocation, it's forked tongue passing in and out of its mouth.

I levered a shell into the chamber of my twenty-five thirty-five, Long Tom Winchester. Don held the light. I aimed the gun a few inches below the snake's head, pulled the trigger, and three inches at the head end of the snake fell to the ground.

The blast from my gun was deafening. Flame belched from the muzzle at least three feet. The sound echoed up the canyons and over the mountain tops.

Don sat a big foot near the end of the writhing snake, while I cut its rattles free and tucked them in my coat pocket. We took flight again.

The instant the gun went off, all noise, lights, and movements ceased at the orchard. Before things came to life again, we were well on our way. Those people would never catch us.

At the creek crossing we stopped on the bank to watch. They were driving faster now, and the spotlight was really searching. We crossed Snyder Creek and walked up the point of the ridge a ways. We sat down to rest and watch their movements. The car made two trips across the field in search of the ones who shot the gun. We often wondered what went on in their minds as they searched in vain.

We took our time as we walked toward home. It was a shame such an exciting night had to come to an end. But, like everything else, all good things ceased sometime.

My dog greeted me with a couple woofs when I walked toward the house. I walked in and Mom asked if we had any luck. I went to bed, tired but content. Don and I had another true story to talk about.

I graduated from the eighth grade in the spring of 1938. I was fourteen years old. Don had graduated the year before and had a steady job working on a cattle ranch.

He was a man, six feet one inch tall and of average build. He weighed around one hundred and forty-five pounds and was slightly bow-legged. He dressed western like I did, only his Stetson had a nine inch crown with a five inch brim. Unless he was building fence or cutting wood he wore cowboy boots with under-slung heels. Don was a good cowboy and had gained the respect of every farmer and rancher in the country.

For a long time he was taller by two or three inches than I was. But during my fourteenth year I became a half an inch taller than he was.

I patterned my life after him, even to the point of carrying my billfold in my left front pocket and a big belt buckle right above it. I dress that way to this day. There wasn't much to me. I was tall and slim, weighed maybe a hundred and twenty pounds. Like Don, I dressed western except my hat was a six inch crown and three inch brim. I've never dressed any other way.

Finally, the great day came for me to say good-bye forever to book learning. Neither of us had any plans to attend high school because we thought it was a waste of time.

The winter of 1937-38 wasn't too rough on the stock. Wildlife was in good shape too. The deer didn't loose much weight, either. It should be a really good fawn year coming up.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
THE GREAT HORNED BULL

We had made a couple night tours of the countryside just for the fun of it. We counted several deer by car light. On our way home one night a big gray-looking doe crossed in front of the car and jumped a fence. Because of the size and color we figured she was barren.

We started to reminisce about the times we had gone night hunting, and of the close calls and thrills we experienced. The more we talked the better it sounded. By the time we got home an idea had jelled together.

Don knew of a spring on the cattle ranch he worked on. He rode up to it one day looking for cows and noticed how cut up it was by deer. There was a salt log a ways off from the water. It helped attract deer and other wildlife to that spot.

He found a stick and drew a picture in the dirt. First, the four directions were indicated by N.E.S.W. Dodge Spring was at the head of a wide draw, actually like a long narrow finger off a field nearby. Big piles of rock were stacked next to the hill. A homesteader probably raised a garden below the spring at one time. It was in a well-protected spot.

A couple hours before dark we drove to Dodge Bridge across Rogue River to snag a sucker fish or two and see if any Game Wardens were hanging around. In those days there were very few cars on the road, and if one drove by, generally we knew the occupants. It might have been an hour before another one came along.

We drove around awhile and looked for strange cars. The country seemed safe. We parked in a county rock pit, out of sight of the road. The sky was cloudy, and it was beginning to get chilly. When it started to get dark we headed in the general direction of the spring. It was about a quarter mile across an open field to our destination. It's a startling thing as you pussy-foot along in the dark and bump your foot against a China Pheasant. They make one heck of a noise flapping and squawking before they get airborne.

Big oak and laurel trees began to close in as we approached the draw. It was only a short distance to the spring. We would soon be hidden from view and could flash our spotlight.

Don gave it a try to see if any deer had come down to the flat. Some distance away the light reflected off the eyes of an animal of some kind, but disappeared. How exciting it was.

Overhead was an airplane, propelled by four motors. The momentary roaring drowned out all other noises. It seemed like it would scare everything out of the country. We stood and watched the blinking lights as it slowly faded away. Than we trudged along toward the end of the clearing.

The salt log was to our right, and something was moving around. We approached with caution. Over to one side was another noise of some kind. Directly ahead there were shuffling sounds all over the place, even next to us. We turned our lights on at the same time. Eyes were shining from everywhere.

Don and I had walked almost through about thirty head of white-faced cattle. They had bedded down near the salt log. The shuffling sound was when one would stand up.

Directly in front of us was a huge Hereford bull, his head turned toward us, long pointed horns turned toward the ground. There was a low beller coming from his parted

jaws as he raked the dirt with first one front foot then the other. His head was broad and eyes set apart. The light reflected off one eye at a time as he slowly turned his head from side to side.

We must have stood in one spot for half a minute or so before the shock wore off. We cautiously retraced our steps and eyed a low-limbed oak tree as we walked by.

We listened hard as we walked right along toward the safety of a fence. Apparently, the cattle had settled down for the night. Thank goodness.

It didn't take long to get back to the rock pit where the car was. The worst part was we had to approach with caution. There was always a chance that someone was waiting for us.

I stayed back in the shadows while Don went around and slipped up behind a pile of rock. If everything was ok, he would let me know with a signal we used by blowing past the end of a twenty-two shell.

After about ten minutes, I heard the high-pitched sound two times. Unless you knew what made the noise it could have been a night bird or animal of some kind. It was ok to start moving out.

Don drove his car onto the main road before he switched on the lights. The trip back home was leisure, the night was young and there was much to talk about.

Times were beginning to turn around a little now. Wages were thirty cents an hour and people were showing signs of depression recovery. We didn't realize it then, but our escapade that night was the last time Don and I went night hunting until we were seventeen and eighteen years old.

Just a few days before he was inducted into the army, Don came and spent the night with us. At that time we lived four miles from Shady Cove. My two sisters, Loretta and Sally, listened to the stories Mom and Dad told of what they knew about some of the night hunts Don and I were on. We filled in on the parts they didn't know about.

By around nine o'clock, I mentioned maybe we should go try our luck tonight. I never had to say it twice to draw Don's attention. He grabbed his hat and was ready to go.

I tore the side from a brown paper bag to draw an outline on. Don had always been the leader and drew a picture in the dirt with a stick. This last time was my turn.

I marked the direction down first. It was important to know where N.E.S. and W. was from our starting point. We sat at the South end of the table as I sketched the map.

Beyond our field a half a mile was a canyon that went from the bottom of the slope up about three-fourths of a mile. It reminded me of a place where a mighty mud slide came down from Vestal Mountain and wiped everything out in its path.

The canyon was nothing but bed rock and small ledges for a long way up each side and to the top. There was an occasional scrub oak and some stunted chaparral trying their best to grow from a crack or ledge along the way. Lichen grew in various colors depending on certain amounts of moisture and sunlight. A winding trail went up the V-shaped draw. Dampness caused several kinds of thick, green and grayish moss to grow. It covered everything the sun didn't hit.

My plan was to walk to the top of the canyon where there was a long, narrow plateau. There were springy places and lots of acorn-bearing oak trees. I had noticed deer there every time I rode through.

If we had good luck it would be an easy haul to drag the deer down the canyon to flat ground. I would go get my car and drive right to it.

We headed out on foot toward the mountain. I took the lead. Old feelings of excitement and anticipation came to mind as we walked across the field. Even the night noises joined in once we were at the bottom of the solid rock canyon.

It was easy to follow this trail. There were no tree limbs to dodge or brush patches to scramble through. We walked quietly along, never uttering a word, just like old times. I noticed something that caused me to stop in my tracks. Under foot was a bluish glimmer of light. It covered the trail tread about sixteen inches wide, and all along the way. It was unbelievable. Closer examination with a flashlight proved it to be tiny worms. They were half an inch long and were bent in the middle, both ends touching and they were dirty grey in color.

We turned the light off. It caused the insects to shine a brilliant blue. The dark night and the blue streak under foot was weird and spooky.

Don and I decided to terminate our night hunt. We climbed up from the trail to a rock ledge and talked. Like many times in the past, Don rolled a Bull Durham cigarette. But, unlike all the other times, he didn't have to be careful about the flair of a lighted match or the smell of tobacco smoke. Air moves up canyon in the evenings because cooler air rises from open country.

We found out later the small worms on the trail that night were the larva of lightning bugs.

That evening was our last night hunt. We had steady jobs by then. We didn't have time for such things any more, and better yet, we didn't have to subsidize our food supply.

Never again did we ever kill a deer or any other game animal or bird out of season. But there were, and still are, those people who do. We call them game hogs. If they were ever apprehended, each one should suffer the most serious penalty. The depression of the late nineteen twenties and early thirties almost caused people to think of us as renegades, outlaws. But we were only trying to survive the hectic years after the Stock Market went belly up. Millionaires went broke. Rich and poor were on the same level, and only common sense helped us to survive.

G.J.W.